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ABSENTEEISM.

27306

BY

LADY MORGAN.

" Les absens ont toujours tort."

" You heare of a case as it were in a dreame, and feell not the smart that vexeth us."—*Speech of the Earl of Kildare to Cardinal Wolsey.*

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1825.

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LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

TO

CHARLES BROWNLOW, ESQ.

M. P.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR recent speech on the Catholic question, has been hailed as an event favourable to the best interests of Ireland by all who in sympathising with her sufferings, have sought for, and ascertained their master cause.

All Irishmen are brave! it is scarce a national boast to say so! for the courage of nerve and sinew is, after all, a quality of pretty

general distribution, "from Indus to the Pole." Man is every where a pugnacious animal; and *les heros de circonstance*—prompt to fight "for any God or King"—are always to be had for hire, be the *cavalier pagante* who he may. But there is a quality of courage, which has been found rare in all ages and in all regions, the peculiar endowment of high, free, and above all, of *honest minds*. This is the courage that sets at nought

"The world's dread sneer,
Which scarce the stern philosopher can scorn,"

which boldly opposes a startling truth to a received opinion, which frankly recants the cherished error of early associations, and avows the change operated by arduous inquiry and clear conviction, at the expense of all worldly interests, and the sacrifice of all private feelings. Such, Sir, is the courage which you have displayed upon a subject of vital importance to

Ireland. As an Irishwoman, I beg to offer my mite of gratitude for the benefit conferred upon our common country—convinced that whenever the spirit of those sentiments which you have avowed shall govern the councils of the nation, Absenteeism will cease to be a national malady.

I have the honor to be,

With every sentiment of respect,

Your obedient Servant,

SYDNEY MORGAN.

London, June 4th, 1825.

PREFACE.

THE following pages were originally published in the New Monthly Magazine. The continued demand for the numbers in which they appeared, has induced the proprietor to reprint the article, and it is now offered to the public in a substantive form.

Notwithstanding the intense interest which is felt throughout all England concerning Ireland and Irish affairs, notwithstanding the frequent debates in parliament, and more frequent pamphlets and volumes published on points of Irish politics and œconomy, the prevailing ignorance

on these subjects still operates powerfully in maintaining prejudices the most unfounded and the most fatal, and in retarding those measures of wisdom and of justice without which Ireland can never be happy, or the British Empire secure.

It is this ignorance more especially which enables the party opposed to the settlement of Ireland to occupy public attention with minor grievances, behind which the danger and malice of their system are concealed from a nation too generous to tolerate open and avowed oppression. No sooner is the question of Catholic Emancipation proposed in the senate, with some chance of obtaining a favourable consideration, than one or other of these convenient abuses is thrust forward to distract attention and to puzzle the will. The absentees, the deficiency of employment, the potatoe diet, the want of poor laws, or the want of education, are, from time to time put forth as the

paramount evil, the gushing fountain of every misfortune of Ireland; while the main subject of complaint, the Catholic disability, is studiously represented as affecting only a few briefless barristers, or ambitious landlords. The advantage which is thus obtained in pre-occupying the public mind, and in affording additional ground for a superstructure of sophisms is immense.

The British nation has so many and such vast interests to pursue, its relations with every country in the world are so many and so complicated, that the most instructed of its subjects can find but little time and attention to bestow on any one of them, however important. The public in general is therefore compelled to repose confidence in those who affect a knowledge of each particular subject; and to take for granted the propositions they advance. When the men who should be the guides of public opinion are false to their trust, and in-

stead of presenting truths in a clear and perspicuous form, studiously bury them beneath a mass of plausibilities, or entangle them in a net-work of sophistry, the task of unweaving their web, and detecting their fallacies, must be again and again undertaken, before a credulous and a pre-occupied people can be made aware of the deception, and enabled to judge of the question at issue by its intrinsic merits.

On this account, it cannot but be deemed most unfortunate that the friends of Ireland unwittingly complicated the recent discussion on the Catholic Question, by the two bills with which they clogged their main proposition. It was not sufficient that the public should be dinned and stupified with the mass of untelligible and absurd theology with which that very plain question of policy and common morality is too unfortunately loaded; but it must also be mystified with high sounding phrases of "disfranchisement," "oppression of the poor,"

and other similar phantoms. To lead the British public to imagine that the disqualification of the forty shilling freeholders would affect the influence either of the catholic or protestant party in Ireland, was, to say the best of it, a strange mistake: but on the other side, to attempt making men believe that the franchise is a benefit to its holder, or that the existing representative system of Ireland, with or without the forty shilling freeholders, has any the remotest practical utility as an instrument of liberty or of self-taxation, is a gross and absolute deception. All the discussion which was raised on this most silly of disputes (and the enemies of emancipation were not slow to profit by the advantage) was *de lana caprina*, and so much diversion of the public mind from the main point at issue; serving only to inflame enemies, and to divide friends. Though no one will dispute that both the riders were appended to the Catholic Bill in deference to

the opponents of that measure, and with an honest intention to conciliate and to compromise, yet in the event, the introduction of extraneous matter has proved eminently unfavourable to the cause, and will, it is to be hoped, never again be attempted.

The futility of the arguments derived from a putting forth of secondary causes of evil in Irish politics, as directed against the entertainment of the Catholic Question, is the greater, in as much as all the various subjects which are advanced as matters of complaint, derive immediately from this one source. Deficient capital, deficient knowledge, deficient civilization, are all the necessary consequences of bad government,—of that bad government for whose sake Catholic has been set against Protestant, and the Irish people divided, in order to prevent the assertion of their political rights. In England people are governed in their opinions on the Catholic Question exclusively by their hopes

and fears; and none but the clergy have a corrupt interest in withholding justice from any religious sect. But in Ireland power and place, the licence to oppress, and the facility of living on the public purse, are closely entwined with the permanence of a system, which, while it tramples the Catholic in the dust, degrades and impoverishes the whole population, for the exclusive benefit of a few powerful families. It is bad government, and the destraction and turbulence which bad government has engendered, that drives industry and capital from the country, and forces the peasantry to abandon all pretence to luxuries and refinements, whether moral or physical. It is bad government that banishes meat from the cotter's table, and instruction from his mind. It is bad government that puts a pike in his hand, and hardens his heart against all the charities of life; it is bad government that makes property insecure, and life precarious; it is bad government, there-

force, that induces the aristocracy to fly to happier regions, to abandon their duties to their country and to themselves, and to seek for tranquillity and safety even at the expense of half their fortunes; and it is, above all, bad government which renders the absence of a limited aristocracy an evil of magnitude, either morally, politically, or economically.

The geographical position of Ireland, and its political dependence, (the necessary consequence of that position,) must always occasion more absenteeism than usually occurs in other nations. The robbery and spoilation of the native proprietors to endow the pampered favourites of a foreign court, which took place in the preceding centuries, afford another cause for this evil; but by far the greatest number of absentees are banished by the direct operation of the penal code, or by its indirect influence in limiting the pursuit of fortune at home. Ireland has no field for enterprise and industry, it has no

market for merchandize. It has no scope for honest ambition, no promise of pleasure, no resting place for repose; and yet it is expected that those who have the means of quitting the land will inhabit it out of respect for a principle, or regard for an abstraction!

Absenteeism considered in itself is an unnatural ill. There is usually so much of ease, of happiness, and of personal consequence in living at home surrounded by friends, relations, and a respectful tenantry,—there is usually so much mortification and disgust in the condition of a stranger and a foreigner, that nothing but political causes can drive the great proprietors of a country to permanently abandon their estates. Yet so natural is it for men to complain of the evil which strikes the most powerfully on the senses,—so convenient is it for those, who are determined in the denial of justice, to make absenteeism the *causa causans* of calamities which they want the humanity to

relieve, that all classes of persons, the Protestant and the Catholic, the mere Irish and the lord of the pale, the oppressor and the oppressed, the Irish corporator and the English minister have joined in a common cry against absentees. It is not therefore very surprising that the mere John Bull, wrapped in his own affairs, and buried in his counting-house, should believe what every one repeats, and should shut his eyes against the real causes of that turbulence and that discontent which, though they have given him so much trouble and uneasiness, are yet too far removed from his gaze to allow of the formation of an independent judgment. It is not very wonderful that he should credit the assertion so hardily made, that Catholic Emancipation is not the one thing needful to Ireland, the essential preliminary, without which, no practical relief can be afforded to the economical distresses of the country.

In taking up the subject of absenteeism, the peculiar bent of Lady Morgan's mind, and the character of her habitual pursuits, have inevitably given a picturesque turn to her ideas, and induced her to view the matter less as an economist than as a poet and a woman. But the great truth has not escaped her, that absenteeism is less a cause than an effect: and while in the romance of her imagination she has delineated what Ireland might be under the fostering protection of an enlightened and liberal aristocracy, she has not forgotten that under existing circumstances it must remain for ever the blighted victim of an oppressive and ignorant *bureaucratie*.

T. C. MORGAN.

London, June 3, 1825.

ABSENTEEISM.

" Les absens ont toujours tort."

La Rochefaucault.

THE phrase " Absentee," says Dr. Johnson, is one " used *with regard to Irishmen* living out of their country;" and as its origin is Irish, so its use and application are strictly confined to the history of that unfortunate people. The inference to be drawn from this fact is plain: that there is something in the circumstances of the Irish, peculiar to themselves,—something which forces upon them a line of conduct contrary to the ordinary instincts of humanity, and compels them to fly from that land which all other nations regard with more or less of favour

and affection,—from that land which youth quits with regret, and to which age clings with passion, when all other passions fade,—the land of their nativity.

In every history of Irish grievances, this cabalistical term "absentee" appears in the front of the array, and, like the terrible "*Il Bondocani*" of the Calif of Bagdat, strikes down all before it,—the apology for every abuse, the obstacle to every plan of amelioration, the bugbear of the timid, the stalking-horse of the designing.

"Absenteeism," observes the Secretary for the Home Department, "is an operative cause of tumult, but it is without a remedy;" and thus dismissing all ministerial responsibility with a laconic aphorism, he launches an integral portion of the empire committed to his management, to revolve for ever in the turbulent whirlpool of a vicious circle of cause and effect. Tumult expels the rich landholders, the

absence of the rich landholders perpetuates tumult: this is a law of nature, which admits of "no remedy;" and the executive have nothing to do but to procure the passing of penal statutes according to the necessities of the moment, and to find the means of extorting four millions a year from English industry, to pay the expense of Irish misrule.

In political philosophy there are no evils without a remedy, save those which arise out of the common condition of humanity;—and the minister who confesses a political evil which he cannot remove, should remove himself: for he is himself the greatest evil with which the people have to contend. Sully, who administered the affairs of France under the most adverse circumstances, when it was still harassed with civil contentions and torn with religious factions; saw no political impossibilities, though many political difficulties, with which he courageously and successfully grappled: but, alas!

the Secretary for the Home Department is not Sully.

To what physiological peculiarity of constitution this irremediable tendency to wander, inherited from their progenitors by the restless sons of the great Milesius, is to be attributed, the learned Secretary has not informed us; and it is certain that Spurzheim, on his visit to the Irish capital, discovered no migratory inequality upon the surface of the Irish cranium, to account for the disposition. But in whatever particular of temperament or exuberance of cerebral developement the cause of this "effect defective" lies latent, it is matter of historic fact, that though the ancient Irish were restless enough at home, ("never," says Campion, "wanting drift to drive a tumult,") yet this activity, which induced them "to pick a quarrel, fall in love, or any other diverting accident of that kind," never found vent in absenteeism. Where, indeed, could Irishmen go to better their condi-

tion, when all in Ireland, who were not saints, were kings; and many were both, while none were martyrs.* "*Il est certain nègoce,*" says the French proverb, "*où l'on perd beaucoup en quittant boutique;*" and this proverb, at all

* Irish potentates were then as plenty "as Munster potatoes." "Ils se coudoyoient," as in the *salle des rois* of Napoleon. Irish saints were equally numerous; but, if the scandalous chronicles of the times be worthy of credit, the social order of that day was not the better for the circumstance. While King Mac Murrogh was running away with Queen O'Rourke, wife of O'Rory, King of Breffny, who was on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's purgatory, his son was undergoing the operation of having those eyes put out, which had looked too tenderly on the Queen of Ossory. The gallantries of these Macs and O's from the earliest ages to the present day, recall the answer of the French Silvester Daggerwood to his manager, who asked his line of parts, "*Chacun s'en tienne au metier de ses pères; je sais que dans notre famille, nous sommes tous amoureux de père en fils.*"

times applicable to Irish absentees, was particularly so in that golden age, so often referred to by antiquaries, when Ireland, "lying aloof in the Western Ocean, was a nest of kingdoms," when superb and wealthy monasteries and royal palaces occupied every foot of the territory, and when swallows built their nests in old men's beards for want of worse habitations. In those true church and state times of Ireland's prosperity, of which the Orangeman's Utopia is but a type, it is little wonderful that the people gave into no wanderings, but those "*du cœur et de l'esprit;*" and that a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's purgatory, a royal progress of some Toparck of the South to a Dynast in the North, or a morning visit from King Mac Turtell to his close neighbour King Gillemohalmoghe,* (which oc-

* King Mac Turtell was King of Dublin, and held his kingdom by tribute from the King of Leinster. "Not far from Dublin," says the admirable Maurice Regan, historiographer to Mac

casionally ended in the broken heads of both parties,) should include the recorded absenteeism of two thousand years

It was reserved, however, for one of these royal heroes first to commit the patricidal crime: and the first Irish absentee of note, though a great king, was but a *mauvais sujet*, having pillaged his people, wasted his revenue, ran away with his neighbour's wife, and sold his country for a mess of pottage. It is almost unnecessary to add that this royal founder of absenteeism is condemned to the contempt of posterity by the title of Dermot Mac Murrogh

Murrogh,—" not far from Dublin there lived an Irish king named Gillemohalmoghe." Of the territories of this prince, Michael's lane in Dublin formed a part. It is called in the black book of Christchurch, Gillemohalmoghe. As there is some reason to suppose that the kingdom extended as far as Swords, Sir Compton Domville may be regarded as the modern representative of the Gillemohalmoghe dynasty.

O'Kavenagh, King of Leinster; and that the result of his absenteeship was the successful invasion of Ireland by Henry II. the crusading grants of Pope Adrian IV. and, above all, the tearful forfeitures followed by rebellion on one part, and on the other by an effort at extermination, which have multiplied from age to age those possessors and deserters of the soil, who have drawn over "the profits raised out of Ireland, and refunded nothing."

* Child's Discourse upon Trade.—"No inconsiderable portion of the entire of Ireland has been confiscated twice, and perhaps thrice, in the course of a century."—*Lord Clare's Speech on the Union.*

The causes of absenteeship are, in fact, coeval with the first steps of English power in this country. "Those that were adventurers," says Temple, "in the first conquests, and such others of the English nation as came over afterwards, took possession by former grants of the whole kingdom, and *drove the Irish* in a manner out of all habitable parts of it, and settled themselves in all the plains and fertile

It appears very probable that one of the motives by which the lords of Ireland (as the English kings were long styled) were actuated in giving such large tracts of land to great English proprietors, was to get rid of the troublesome and rebellious Barons, by tempting them to reside in that "most beautiful and sweet country as any is under heaven," where so much was given up to their power and pillage, and where the services demanded in return, "the raising of forts and castles and fencing themselves with garrisons, as captains, keepers, and constables," might forward the royal interests by protecting its power against the inroads of the natives. "For, except places of the country, especially in the chief towns, ports, and sea-coasts. It was *no capital* offence to kill any of the rest of the Irish; the law did neither protect their life nor revenge their death."—*History of Irish Rebellion.* Here is the starting-post of absenteeism, pointed out by an English minister and historian.

Leinster," says Campion, "all other parts retayned still their ancient kind of government, and were always ready to start at every corner, *ag and rag*, to expell the English." But the framers of Magna Charta, the guardians of all that was then known of liberty in England, were not by the bribe of principalities to be kept from the great scene of action; and some of the most considerable, having accepted, or seized upon the fairest portions of the land, made them over to sons-in-law or other kinsmen; and having thus, by the scratch of their rude pen, *

* The signatures of Magna Charta evince that he nobility of those times, like Pierrot in the farce, were "*un peu brouillés avec l'Alphabet;*" but the spirit which founded that great arch of British freedom, was well worth all the namby-pamby acquirements of all the modern nobles who ever presided over archæology, (or, as Walpole calls it, "old woman's logic,") flirted with the muses, and combined to give tracts to England, or rose-trees to the starving peasantry of Connaught and Munster.

conveyed to others the fee simple of an Irish province, hastened back to England to dispute the power of the barbarous despots, who reigned by their sufferance, or were deposed by their caprice.

In process of time, the mischief of this species of transfer was not only felt as an additional grievance by the Irish, but as an annoyance by the English sovereign.* The injury done to their power by the absence of those whom they had deputed to watch over it, at a time when that power was held by a precarious tenure, was deemed so great, that a law against absentees was passed so early as the time of Richard II. The divisions of the houses of

* Henry II. obliged the Earl Strongbow to return to Ireland, "being likely for his own wealth and assurance to procure all possible means of bridling and annoying the Irish." In the time of Edward III. military emigration seems to have been considerable. The Irish robbers did good service at Cressy.

York and Lancaster, however, abrogated all laws; "at which time," says Spenser, "all English lords and gentlemen which had great possessions in Ireland, repaired over hither into England, some to succour their friends here, and to strengthen their partie, others for to defend their lands and possessions here against such as hovered after the same, upon hope of the alteration of the kingdom, and success of that side which they favoured and affected."* The result of this absenteeism of

* The Irish were always ready for a little commotion at home or abroad; "Great was the credit of the Geraldines ever when the House of York prospered, and likewise the Butlers thryved under the bloud of Lancaster." It was this disposition towards the House of York, which caused the temporary success of Perkin Warbeck in Ireland. The unfortunate Duke of Clarence, who was drowned in a butt of Malmsey, was born in Ireland during the lieutenancy of his father, the Duke of York. His godfathers were the Earls of Ormond and Desmond.

the great landholders of Ireland was natural and inevitable. "The Irish, whom before they had banished into the mountains, where they lived only upon white meates,* as it is recorded, seeing now their lands so dispeopled and weak-

Whether this Irish origin will serve to explain the peculiarity of his destiny, I cannot say; but the residence of a York in Dublin may in part account for the popularity of the faction in that city. Shakspeare probably alludes to this personage in Henry VI.

"Please it your grace to be advertised
The Duke of York is newly come from Ireland,
And with a puissant and mighty power
Of Gallowglasses and stout Kernes
Is marching hitherward in proud array."

* The English reader is not to suppose that these *blanc-mangers* of the poor Irish were such as are to be had at the Verys or Beauvilliers. The Irish white meates were curds and whey, the only provisions which men whose lives were "in wandering spent and care" could obtain. The Irish then lived like Arabs, a prey of cattle being the subject of their fiercest contests.

ened, came down into all the plains adjoining, and thence expelling those few English that remayned, re-possessed them again." But these re-possessions were only temporary. New conquests and new forfeitures ensued. New possessors, unaffected to the soil, and disdainful of its children, afforded fresh causes of absenteeism, which, in whatever way it operated, was injurious to the country; till at length the forfeiture of Leix and Offaly (the King and Queen's Counties) under Edward VI. threw the whole of those spacious and fertile districts into the hands of new proprietors; who having established themselves by "fire and sword," transferred the ownership "*to foreigners by connexion, and resided themselves in England.*"

But if the first barbarous English legislators for Ireland (and when has the epithet been inapplicable?) were, at an early period of their unfixed power, sensible of the injury which the state and the country suffered from absen-

teeism—if the Plantagenets took cognizance of the evil, and endeavoured to provide against it by statute, the Tudors (those sanguinary, but sagacious despots) considered the absence of the Irish from their homes and country as a state engine; and wielded it with a policy which always advanced their own interests, and confirmed their power over that unhappy land. Sometimes they allured the Irish nobility to their splendid court for the purpose of dazzling their imagination, and corrupting their patriotism. Sometimes, on shallow pretexts, they cited them as accused or criminals, to awe them by their array of power, or to intimidate them by their display of cruelty. Yet, frequently forced to feel that the prosperity of the country and the English interests were both best served by the permanent residence of the gentry of the pale, they did not the less frame laws which made it penal for the proprietors of the soil to spend its profits elsewhere than at

home.* The love which the Irish had borne to the house of York, had rendered it a point

Had they made the country endurable to live in, they would have done what all the penal laws that ever have been framed can never affect—they would have kept the Irish at home. At the time when Henry VIII. was framing his "act of absencie" for preventing the increase of the absentees the state of the country in which they *were by law* obliged to live, is thus described by Spenser; —"Notwithstanding that the same was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle, (Munster more particularly is here speken of,) yet in one year and a half (during the war carried on against the Earl of Desmond for the purpose of forfeiting his estates) the natives were brought to such wretchedness, as that any stoney heart would rue the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glyns they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them, they looked like anatomies of death, they shoke like ghosts crying out of their graves, they did eat the dead carrion, happy when they could find them;

of courteous policy to appoint the second sons of the king to the Lieutenancy of Ireland, with a deputy for the execution of the high office: and Henry VIII. as Duke of York, while yet a boy, and during the life-time of his elder brother, began his career of power under this character, conjointly with his deputy, Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, "a mighty made man," says his chronicler, "full of honour and courage." (1501) This grand conservator of the peace, however, had the old Irish fashion of being occasionally disposed to break it; and his fierce feuds with the Butlers, Earls

yea, and one another soon after, inasmuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able to continue them withal, that in short space there was none almost left; and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast."—*State of Ireland*, 1581.

of Ormond, (" nothing inferior to Kildare in stomache, and in reach of policy farre beyond him,") were the causes " of much ruffle and unquietness to the realm." These served his enemies for a pretext to draw down upon him the displeasure of the English government, and finally induced Henry VII. to summon the old deputy over to the English court, and to seek to break down that haughty and turbulent spirit in a region rarely favourable to powerful energies and independence of mind. A bon-mot saved the earl from the danger which awaited him, and limited his absenteeism to a few months residence in the court of Henry, from which he returned to Ireland more powerful than he left it.

Gerald Fitzgerald, son of the aforesaid earl, " a gentleman valiant and well spoken," succeeded his father in all his dignities; but though appointed lord deputy of Ireland, his influence, power, and spirit, soon awakened the

jealousy of Henry VIII. Being "overtaken with vehement suspicion of sundry treasons, it was deemed politic to draw him away from Ireland; and, by secret *heavers* and enviers of his fortunes, nourishers of the old grudge, the king was urged to call upon him to attend the English court." The illustrious but involuntary absentee, was, on his first arrival in England, treated with a severity vainly intended to intimidate a spirit which was afterwards to be subdued by other and more seducing means. Among many frivolous charges, "*he was opposed with divers interrogatories touching the Earl of Desmond, his cousin, a notorious traytor.*" His trial, however, was but a mockery, and as the object was to sink the popular chief of a nation into a pliant courtier, to bind him more firmly to the English interests, and to weaken his feelings of patriotism, the union of the turbulent Gerald was proposed with the Lady Elizabeth Grey, the kings own kinswoman and daughter of the Duke of Suffolk.

This marriage, celebrated with royal splendour, with all the festivities of a boisterous but splendid court, was deemed a preliminary step to permanent subjection, and to frequent and long visits to the English court.

Scarcely, however, had Kildare returned home, and resumed the deputyship of Ireland, when the domestic tumults of the great lords of the pale involved him in new accusations on the part of the crown, "intimations of new treasons passing to and fro, with complaynts and replyes;" and as Cardinal Wolsey "*did hate the Kildare bloud,*" and had resolved on breaking down their power, the earl was again called from his stronghold in Ireland, and accused of having "wilfully winked at the Earl of Desmond (whose large possessions were his crimes in the eye of the minister), and with having curried acquaintance and friendship with mere Irish. "While lying under the imputation of a crime, always heinous in the Irish,—natural affection to the land and its suffering

children,—the brave Kildare (like an eagle taken from its eirie in the mountain-cliffs of its native region, and chained to the earth in a golden cage) was suffered to loiter away his existence, in listless indolence and life-wearing anxiety, in the purlieus of a court that resembled the seraglio of an Asiatic satrap, alternately favoured and persecuted, as the caprice of the sovereign or the aversion of the minister ruled the hour. It was at this period, when his mind was borne down by his humiliating position, that he was prevailed on to consent to his daughter the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald's permanent residence at court; and it was by this concession that the loveliest of all Irish absentees, "*the more than celestial Geraldine*," has become an object of interest and admiration to posterity, as the poetical idol of the gallant and unfortunate Surrey.*

* English antiquaries have been much puzzled to determine the identity of this "more than celestial

Although educated at the rural palace of Hunsdon with her kinswomen the Princesses

Geraldine." "Who she was," says Walpole, "we are not directly told." Surrey himself mentions some particulars of her, but not her name. The editor of the last edition of Surrey's Poems, in some short notes on his life, says, "that she was the greatest beauty of her time, and maid of honour to Queen Catharine; but I think I have very nearly discovered who this fair person was, &c. &c. &c. I am inclined to think her poetical appellation was her real name, as every one of the circumstances tally." The elegant antiquary then devotes three pages to prove the probability that Lady Elizabeth, daughter of the Earl of Kildare, was the Geraldine of Lord Surrey. Warton adopts this supposition, and compliments the biographer on having, with the most happy segacity, solved the difficulties of "this little enigmatical ode."—*History of English Poets.* There was, however, a much shorter way of solving the difficulties, namely, the consultation of Irish authors for an historical incident respecting one of the most illustrious Irish families. Campion,

Mary and Elizabeth, and though afterwards maid of honour to the Queen, it is probable that

who had probably many a time and oft seen the "fair Geraldine," with his usual quaint simplicity says, "The Fitzgerald family is touched in the Sonnet of Surrey made upon Kildare's sister, now Lady Clinton;"

From Tuscane came my ladyes worthy race,
Faire Florence was sometime her ancient seate;
The western isle, whose plaisant shore doth face
Wilde Cambre's cliffes, did give her lively heate."

The ode goes on as follows;—

Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast,
Her sire an earle, her dame of prince's blood;
From tender years in Britain she doth rest
With kinges childe, while she tasteth costly food.
Honsdon did first present her to mine yeen,
Bright is her hue, and Geraldine her hight,

&c. &c. &c.

This fair and celebrated Irish absentee, after having sent her illustrious lover to Italy "to defend her beautie by an open challenge," in which he was victorious, married the Earl of Clinton:—a most unsentimental conclusion to a most romantic story.

this lady was rather an hostage than a guest, and was detained more by force than by inclination:—as the sequel of her story goes to prove. "All this while," says Campion, "abode the Earl of Kildare at the court, and with much ado found shifte to be called before the Lords to answer solemnly." When, at last, every excuse for delay was exhausted, and every hope of subduing his invincible spirit faded, he was "called before the lords to answer solemnly," who "sat upon him diversly affectioned; and especially the Cardinal Lord Chancellor (Wolsey) who disliked his cause, comforted his accusers, and enforced the articles objected."

The whole scene of this mock trial is so graphic, and the speeches of the Cardinal and of the Irish Lord Deputy so curious and descriptive of the state and manners of the time, that the introduction may be pardoned of an episode which goes to prove, by a striking instance, that Irish absenteeism under any form, voluntarily or involuntary, graced by royal

favour, or marked by ministerial persecution, is derogatory to the dignity, and injurious to the interests of the Irish nobility. The Earl of Kildare, alone, unfriended, without the aid of counsel to plead, or witness to depose in his behalf, appeared in the midst of the Lords, every one of whom was the slave of the King or the parasite of the minister,—" for what," (says Walpole, one of their own caste,)—" what twelve tradesmen could be found more servile than every court of peers during the whole of this reign?"—Wolsey was the first to speak, and he began with these words:—" I wot well, my Lord, that I am not the meetest man at this board to charge you with these treasons, because it hath pleased some of your pew-fellows to report that I am a professed enemie to all nobilitie, and namely to the Geraldines: but seeing every curst boy can say as much when he is controled, and seeing these points are so weightie that they should not be dissembled of

tus, and so apparent that they cannot be denyed of you, I must have leave, notwithstanding your state slaunder, to be the mouth of these honorable persons at this time, and to trumpe your reasons in your way, howsoever you take me. First, you remember how the lewde Earle your kinsman, who passeth not whom he serve, might he change his master, sent his confederates with letters of credence to Frauncis the French king, and, having but cold comfort there, to Charles the Emperour, proffering the helpe of Mounster and Connaght towards the conquest of Ireland, if either of them would helpe to win it from our King. How many letters? what precepts? what messages? what threats have been sent you to apprehend him? and yet not done! why so? forsooth, I could not catch him: nay, nay, Earle, forsooth you would not nightly watch him. If he be justly suspected, why are you partiall in so great a cause? if not, why are you fearfull to have him

tryed? Yea sir, it will be sworn and deposed to your face, that for feare of meeting him, you have winked, wilfully shunned his sight, altered your course, warned his friends, stopped both eyes and eares against his detectors, and, when soever you tooke upon you to hunt him out, then was he sure before hand to bee out of your walke: surely this juggling and false play little became either an honest man, called to such honour, or a nobleman put in such trust. Had you lost but a cow or a garron of your owne, two hundred Kyrneghes would have come at your whistle, to rescue the prey from the uttermost edge of Ulster: all the Irish in Ireland must have given you the way. But in pursuing so weightie a matter as this, mercifull God! how nice, how dangerous, how wayward have you bin! One while he is from home, sometimes fled, sometimes in the borders where you dare not venture: I wist, my Lord, there be shrewd Bugges in the borders for the Earl of Kildare to feare

The Earle, nay the King of Kildare, for, when you are disposed, you reigne more like than rule the land :—where you are malicious, the truest subjects stand for Irish enemies : where you are pleased the Irish enemie stands for a dutifull subject : hearts and hands, lives and lands, are all at your courtesie : who fawneth not thereon, hee cannot rest within your smell, and your smell is so ranke that you tracke them out at pleasure."

Whilst the Cardinal was speaking, the Earle chafed and changed colour, and sundry proffers made to answer every sentence as it came ; at last he broke out, and interrupted them thus. "My Lord Chancellour, I beseech you pardon me; I am short-witted, and you, I perceive, intend a long tale. If you proceede in this order, halfe my purgation will be lost for lacke of carryage : I have no schoole tricks, nor art of memory ; excepte you heare me while I remember your words, your second processe will hammer out the former." The Lords associate,

who for the most part tenderly loved him, and knew the Cardinal's manner of termes so lothsome, as wherewith they were tyred many years agoe, humbly besought his Grace to charge him directly with particulars and to dwell in some one matter till it were examined through. That granted, "It is good reason (quoth the Earle) that your Grace beare the mouth of this chamber. But, my Lord, those mouthes that put this tale into your mouth, are very wide mouths, such indeed as have gaped long for my wreck, and now at length, for want of better stuff, are fain to fill their mouths with smoak. What my cousin Desmond hath compassed, as I know not, so I beshrew his naked heart for holding out so long. If hee can bee taken by my agents that presently wayte for him, then have my adversaryes betrayed their malice, and this heape of haynous wordes shall resemble a man of strawe, that seemeth at a blush to carry some proportion, but when it is felt and poysed, discovereth a vanity, serving only to fraye crowes;

and I trust your honours will see the proofe hereof and mine innocencie testified in this behalfe by the thing itselfe within these few dayes. But goe to, suppose hee never bee had, what is Kildare to blame for it, more than my good brother of Ossory? notwithstanding his high promises, having also the king's power, he is glad to take egges for his money, and bring him in at leysure. Cannot the Earle of Desmond shift, but I must bee of counsell? cannot hee bee hid, except I winke? If hee bee close, am I his mate? If hee bee friended, am I a traitour? This is a doughty kinde of accusation, which they urge against mee, wherein they are stabled and myred at my first denyall. You would not see him, say they; who made them so familiar with mine eye sight? or when was the Earle within my *Equinas?* or who stood by when I let him slip? or where are the tokens of my willfull hood-winking? Oh, but you sent him word to beware of you: who was the messenger? where are the letters? convince my negative.

See how loosely this idle reason hangeth: Desmond is not taken, well, we are in fault: why? because you are. Who proves it? nobody. What conjectures? so it seemeth. To whom? to your enemies. Who told it them? What other grounds? none. Will they sweare it? they will sweare it. My Lords, then belike they know it: if they know it, either they have my hand to show, or can bring forth the messenger, or were present at a conference, or privy to Desmond, or somebody betrayed it to them, or themselves were my carryers or vice-gerents therein. Which of these parts will they choose? I know them too well to reckon myself convict by their bare wordes, or headlesse hearsayes, or frantick oathes: my letters were soone read, were any such writing extant; my servaunts and friends are ready to bee sifted. Of my cousin Desmond they may lye lewdly, since no man can heere will tell the contrary. Touching my selfe, I never noted in

them either so much wit, or so much faith, that I could have gaged upon their silence the life of a good hound, much lesse mine owne. I doubt not, may it please your honours to oppose them, how they came to knowledge of these matters which they are so ready to depose, but you shall finde their tongues chayned to another man's trencher, and as it were knights of the post, suborned to say, sweare, and stare the uttermost they can, as those that passe not what they say, nor with what face they say it, so they say no truths. But of another thing, it grieveth me that your good grace, whom I take to be wise and sharpe, and who of your own blessed disposition wish me well, should be so farre gone in crediting those corrupt informers, that abuse the ignorance of their state and country to my perill. Little know you, my lord, how necessary it is, not onely for the governour, but also for every nobleman in Ireland, to hamper his vincible neighbours at discretion, wherein, if they

wayted for processe of law, and had not these lives and lands you speake of within their reach, they might pass to loose their own lives and lands without law. You heare of a case, as it were in a dreame, and feell not the smart that vexeth us. In England there is not a meane subject that dare extend this hand to fillip a peere of the realme;—in Ireland, except the lord have cunning to his strength, and strength to save his owne, and sufficient authoritie to racke thieves and varletts when they stirre, hee shall finde them swarme so fast that it will bee too late to call for justice. If you will have our service take effect, you must not tye us always to the judicial proceedings, wherewith your realme, thankbee God, is inured. As touching my kingdome, my Lord, I would you and I had exchanged kingdomes but for one moneth, I would trust to gather up more crummes in that space, than twice the revenues of my poore earledome;—but you are well and warme, and so hold you,

and upbraide not me with such an odious storme. I sleepe on a dablin, when you lye soft in your bed of downe; I serve under the cope of heaven, when you are served under a canopy; I drinke water out of a skull, when you drinke out of golden cuppes; my courser is trained to the field, when your jennet is taught to amble; when you are begraced, and belorded, and crowched and kneeled unto, then I finde small grace with our Irish borderers, except I cut them off by the knees." At these girds the councell would have smiled if they durst; but each man bitt his lippe, and held his countenance. The Cardinall perceived that Kildare was no cake, and rose in a fume from the councell-table, committed the Earle, and deferred the matter till more direct probations came out of Ireland.—It is unnecessary to add, that these "*probations*" were readily procured. "For of this treason," continues the quaint chronicler, "he (Kildare) was found guilty,

and imprisoned in the Tower a long time. The gentleman betook himself to God and the King, was heartily loved of the lieutenant, pittied in all the court, and standing in so hard case, altered little his accustomed hue, comforted other noblemen prisoners with him dissembling his own sorrow.

One night, when the lieutenant and he, for disport, were playing at *slide-groat*, suddenly commeth from the Cardinall a mandat to execute Kildare on the *morrow*. The Earl marking the Lieutenant's deep sigh on reading the bill, 'By Sant Bride,' quoth he, 'there is some mad game in that scralle, but, fall how it will, this throw is for a huddle.' When the worst was told him: 'Now I pray thee,' quoth he, 'doe no more but learn assuredly from the King's owne mouthe whether his Grace be witting thereto or not.' Sore doubted the Lieutenant to displease the Cardinall; yet of very pure devotion to his friend, he posteth to the King at midnight, and said his errand (for all houres

of the day or night, the lieutenant hath accesse to the prince upon occasions.) King Henry, controwling the sawcyness of the priest—those were his tearmes—gave him his signet in token of countermand; which, when the Cardinall had seene, he began to breake into unseasonable words with the lieutenant, which he was loath to heare, and so he left him fretting. Thus broke up the storme for a time, and the next yeare Wolsey was cast out of favour; and within few yeares Sir William Skevington was sent over deputy, who brought with him the Earle pardoned, and rid from all his troubles."

But this "riddance" was only of short duration. New causes of complaint, and new reasons, were soon found or invented for once more drawing the Earl from the strong hold of his interest and power—his native country: and he was again "commanded by sharp letters to repair to England." His arrival there was followed by

a report of his execution,* which soon reached his family in Ireland. His son, whom he had left Lord Justice in his place, the gallant but impetuous Lord Thomas, on hearing of this supposed act of treachery against his father, threw down the sword of office, and flew into open rebellion, followed by his five uncles the Lords Fitzgerald. The insurrection was soon quelled; and the unfortunate Geraldines having surrendered, set out for England on the parole of the Lord Marshal Dorset, where, shortly after their arrival, they were all executed in one day. The death of the old Earl himself in the Tower, where he is said to have died "for thought and paine," ends the tragic story of the enforced absenteeism of the Geraldines.†

* "A false muttering flew about that his execution was intended."

† "Soon after," says Campion, "was the house of the Geraldines attaynted by Parliament, and all of the name busily trayned out for feare of new com-

This murder of the Lady Geraldine's uncles, father, brother, and that of her unfortunate and highly endowed lover, (" who," says Lodge, " reflected splendour even on the name of Howard," and who was put to death by Henry VIII. for quartering the arms of Edward the Confessor,) must have rendered the English Court a dreary residence to her. Still, however, she remained there, most probably under the influence of the same major force which first drew her from her domestic home. But while Henry thus continued to retain the most beautiful

motions. But Thomas Leurces, late Bishop of Kildare, schoolemaster to a younger brother, Gerald Fitzgerald, the Earle that now liveth, secretly stole away with the childe, first into Scotland, then into France, and misdoubting the French, into Italy; where Cardinall Pole, his neare kinsman preserved him till the raigne of Edward the Sixt, with whom hee entred into high favour, and obtayned of him his olde inheritance of Meinothe."

woman of Ireland near his person, he began to see, as it appears, the policy of keeping the men at home; and he passed his famous bill against "*absencie*," the preamble of which is curious, as portraying the evils against which it was framed—at least that portion of the evils by which the English government, for a long series of years, was alone touched. Like a good many more modern acts, be it remarked *en passant*, it commences by the formal averment of a self-evident falsehood: "That, for as much as it was notorious and manifest, that this land of Ireland being heretofore inhabited and *in obedience* to the said king's most noble progenitors, who in those days in the righte of the Crown of England had great possessions, rentes, and profits, within the same land," &c. It then goes on to state "the ruine, rebellion, and decay," which ensued by the absence of the great landholders: who, "after abiding within the said land, nobly and valiantly defended the

same against all the king's enemies, and also *kept the same in such tranquillity and good order,* as the King of England had due obedience of the inhabitance there, the laws obeyed, and the revenues and regalitie were duely answered;" but that afterwards "they and their heires absented themselves out of the said land of Ireland, *denjorning* within the realm of England, not pondering, ne regarding the preservation thereof,—the townes, castels, and garrisons appertaining to them fell in ruin and decay, and the English inhabitants therein, in default of defence and *justice,* and by compulsion of those of the Irish, were exiled, whereby the king's said progenitors lost as well their said dominion and subjection there, as also their revenues and profites; and their said enemies by redopting or retaining the said lands, dominions, and possessions, were elevated into great pride," &c. &c.

Hitherto, with a few exceptions, *absencie,* as touching a residence in England, had been con-

fined to the great Irish lords of the pale, who, although of English descent, and bearing Norman names, had in the course of successive generations run through all those shades of naturalization, which left them in manners, habits, and affections, but little distinguishable from the aboriginal Irishman, who proudly traced his origin to the Lady Scota, the daughter or grand-daughter of King Pharaoh.*

But it was reserved for the reign of the Virgin Queen to drive the genuine nobility of Ireland from their native land at any loss or risk into distant regions † and unknown countries, or to allure

* The various epithets applied to these retrogradations on the scale of civilization are very amusing. Between the "mere and uncivil Irish," and the "English Lords of the Pale," were the "English Lords beginning to wax Irish;" "degenerating," "becoming mere Irish," and ending by being "very wilde Irish," &c. &c.

† O'Sullivan Beare, one of the bravest and noblest chiefs of Kerry, and Lord of part of the paradise of

them to her own formal and fantastic court, by a show of feminine sympathy; which, though in direct contradiction to her whole policy and conduct, was well calculated to win the unwary, and to soothe the unfortunate.*

Killarney, in writing to the Spanish minister an account of his sufferings at this period, urges him "to the speedy sending of a ship to receive him, his wife, and children, to save them from the hands of his most merciless enemies: Making choice (he pathetically adds) rather to forsake my ancient inheritance, friends, followers, and goods, than any way trust to their graceless pardon or promise."—*Pacata Hibernia.* Here was absenteeship in the sixteenth century!!

* Elizabeth frequently discovered that her Deputies were carrying the joke too far. On the occasion of the wanton massacre of Smerwick, "The queen (says the Bishop of Chichester) was not *pleased* at the *manner* of this execution, and was hardly *after* drawn to admit any excuse of the slaughter committed." The "*manner*" was curious enough,—"It was concluded that only the leaders should be saved,

The Queen, in her quality both of woman and sovereign, was fond of making speeches; and she probably found it prettier to be pathetic than just, as she certainly found it easier to chide than to call in the pack of bloodhounds she had let loose upon the devoted country of her delegated sway. While the Fitzwilliams, the Binghams, the Drurys, the Bagnals, and others of her Irish ministers, were carrying destruction through the land by "fire, sword, and pestilence,"* the fair and royal rhetorician

(the leaders were Spanish officers,) the rest slain, and *all the Irish* hanged up: which was presently put into execution, to the great disliking of the queen, who detested the slaughter of such as yielded themselves."—*Baker's Chronicle.*

* "The Queen was assured," says Leland, speaking of the inhuman rigour of Lord Deputy Gray, "that he tyrannized with such barbarity, that little was left in Ireland for her Majesty to reign over but ashes and dead carcases."—*Hist. of Ire-*

was exclaiming in her closet against their conduct, by classical allusions to parallel facts, which showed at once her learning and her sympathy. "I fear," she said, apostrophizing her ministers in Ireland, "that the same reproach will be made to me as was formerly made by Bato to Tiberius. It is you who are to blame for these things, who have committed your flocks not to shepherds but to wolves." The Irish, "who love learning to a fault," says Spenser, (and women too, God forgive them,) were bewitched by similar declarations of pity, breathed in the language of the learned from the lips of the royal and the fair. The O'Rourkes, the O'Neils, the O'Connors, forgot the wiles and the treachery of which their fathers had been the dupes or the victims; and

land, v. ii. p. 227.—Here are reasons for absenteeship quite as cogent as any which can be advanced in the present day.

each in his turn expiated his credulity in its fatal results.

The English were accustomed to the presence of the Geraldines, the Butlers, the De Courceys, De Burgos, and other great Anglo-Irish lords of the pale, who, though by "gossipry and alliance they occasionally fell into Irish habits, and sported a glib or a mantle at home, were still sure to resume the English costume when at the English court. But the true aboriginal

* The credulity of the Irish has ever been their ruin. Some English officers having assured certain Irish chiefs that, upon surrendering themselves to the government, they would obtain their pardon; those chiefs (says Leland) "embraced the counsel, submitted, and consented to attend the Lord Deputy St. Leger to Ireland. But here the only favour granted them was, that they were not brought to immediate execution. They were committed to prison, their lands declared forfeit, and granted to to those on whose counsel they had surrendered."—*Hist. of Ireland*, v. ii.

Irish gentlemen, the brave O's and Macs, who, driven to their woods and morasses with no other weapon of defence than their skein, their hatchet, or their pike, had for centuries resisted the well-armed force of England,—they were creatures of almost fabulous interest and existence; and the "anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," were not more monstrous to English apprehensions than the "flying Irish," whose wings were supposed to grow beneath their heads. To the higher castes, however, they were known by the reputation of their prowess and their comeliness; and were noted by some of the poets of the day, alike for their invincible spirits and their lofty stature.* This romantic interest thrown round a race at once so brave and so unfortunate, so wild, and

* "Then came the Irishmen of valiant hearts,
And active limbs, and personages tall."
Sir J. Harrington's Translation of Orlando Furioso.

yet so gallant in their bearing, might not have been without its effect in influencing the policy of the coquettish queen, and drawing to her court those (as yet unseen) Thanists, the known admirers of her sex and contemners of her power.

The restlessness of suffering, the enterprise of romantic valour, the partiality of the House of Tudor to the O'Neil's, and other inducements which Elizabeth herself held out, determined the famous Shane O'Neil (by the prescriptive right of ages Thanist of his powerful sept; and by the patent of Henry VIII. to his father, Earl of Tyrone) to visit the court of England in the most perilous moment of his life. The sudden appearance of the representative of the ancient kings of Ulster in the antechambers of Whitehall excited a sensation in which the "lion-ported queen" is said to have deeply and obviously participated. He burst upon the guarded presence of her, whose acts

against his religion and his rights "resembled the bloody mandates of a Turkish divan rather than the mild ordinance of a Christian queen," in all the fearless hardihood of one who "bore a charmed life," fresh from the lines of revolt, with the excitement of the fierce contest between the oppressor and the oppressed fluttering at his bold heart and fevering his manly brow. He is described as entering the presence-chamber at the head of a rude but imposing train, composed of his guard of honour, the Irish gallowglasses, who,—armed with battle-axes, their heads bare, their long hair flowing in locks on their broad shoulders, their yellow surplices with open sleeves trailing to the earth and surmounted by a military harness—formed a strange contrast to the groupings and *tournure* of the ribboned and tagged chivalry through which they passed. Even the "Londoners," says Spenser, "marvelled at this strange sight."

O'Neil had come to plead his own cause at

one of the court historians, "received him with an affectation of tenderness; and after he had resided some time at court, the flattery of his address, which appeared artless and unstudied, and the speciousness of his allegations, so wrought upon her, that, at his departure, she dismissed him with favour and presents."

This absenteeism of O'Neil, though favourable to his pride, and flattering to his vanity while abroad, was injurious to his interests at home. His base-born brother, Matthew, availing himself of his absence, had usurped his rights, and assumed the chieftainship of his sept. The question was debated (as if it were debateable) by the Irish government, who, in defiance of all law, "ruled the point in favour of the bastard; practising (says Parnell*) a policy that has governed them (the English) to the

* Apology, p. 58.

latest times in India, where it has been the custom to raise to the throne, in violation of the customary mode of succession, a person who depended for his station on their power, who was strictly a dependent, and *who might be set aside whenever a favourable opportunity occurred.*" The *Sic jubeo* of the Virgin Queen was, of course, decisive. The bastard was declared the lawful heir; and the consequence was a rebellion on the part of Shane. In this rebellion the chieftain was unfortunate, and the whole possessions, both of Shane and Matthew, were confiscated. "In order," says Parnell, "to divert Shane, the territory was reputed Matthew's; and in order to get rid of Matthew's claim, the territory was confiscated as Shane's."*

* *Si je ne vous mange pas en oiseau, je vous mangerai en souris.* "Other times," they say, "bring other manners;" and it is not impossible that men, restrained by the *manners of our own times*, may avail themselves of the circumstance of their en-

Meanwhile, however, the Queen had won golden opinions in Ireland for her reception of the most popular of Irish chiefs. The gates of absenteeism were now thrown most seducingly open. The track was already beaten down which led from the desolated banks of the Shannon to the pavilioned shores of the Thames.

forced moderation, to reproach the writer who thus recalls a fact disreputable to the English government, with *ripping up old sores*. The fact, however, is "germane to the matter;" for it was such forfeitures that sowed the first seeds of that permanent absenteeism which modern ministers affect to deplore: and it was these flagrant violations of common justice, that first nurtured the lawless disposition in the peasantry, which is made an excuse for the suspension of all constitutional rights, and which is most unjustly charged on the Catholic religion. Besides, as long as the system is continued, which withholds emancipation, and gives over the land to the tyranny and plunder of churchmen and their inherents, the "ripping up old sores" is both useful and justifiable.

Men, whose national failing was a sanguine credulity not untouched with personal vanity, whose infirmity of temperament was a reckless impetuosity, and whose weariness of suffering caught at every change as a relief, now first began to find new hopes for their country and themselves springing up in the "primrose path of dalliance" which conducted them to the British court, and placed them in personal contact with a woman and a queen—with one who, unlike her savage delegates in Ireland, received them "with tenderness, and dismissed them with favour." The baubles given by a royal hand, and displayed at Shane's Castle, were pledges to the followers of O'Neil that the heart of the Queen was of another policy from the counsels of her ministers. This characteristic credulity is not even yet abated by experience. A flattering reception of the Roman Catholic bishops, and a ribbon bestowed on a Roman Catholic peer, led the sanguine Irish to draw a

similar conclusion respecting the politics of George IV. A mandate, therefore got up in the form of a slight accusation, but considered by the accused as an invitation, brought the O'Rourke chief or prince of Brefny promptly and inconsiderately to the feet of the fair sovereign who had issued it.

This gallant Irishman, as renowned for his personal beauty as for his turbulence, had long been a favourite theme of complaint in the despatches of the Irish deputies. Even his personal influence, and the splendid endowments out of which it arose, were brought as damning proofs against him. These also may have induced the Queen to judge for herself; for the handsome absentee was received like O'Neil with a show of tenderness, though not, alas! like him, "dismissed with favour." While history has briefly thrown off the facts of his summons, to court his detention, and his unexpected execution, tradition has woven his

story in the many-coloured web of her own romantic loom; and though the catastrophe of the tale, which still circulates in the neighbourhood of his ruined castle, attests the ignorance or the love of the marvellous of those who invented and circulated it; still there is a dovetailing of the old Irish *Shanaos* with historic record, which shows that *si cela n'étoit pas vrai, c'étoit bien vraisemblable.*

"A wild story concerning O'Rourke," says the author of the History of the Irish Bards, "wanders about the County of Leitrim. O'Rourke was a powerful and turbulent chieftain of this country in the reign of Elizabeth. The Queen invited him to London, making him, at the same time, warm professions of honours and service, though she only intended, by this invitation, to lead him into a kind of exile, in order to secure his obedience. The ingenuous O'Rourke, duped by the Queen's arts, promised to comply. Before his departure, he

assembled his vassals and neighbours in the great hall of his castle, and entertained them with all the splendour of the times.* This

* The only crime of which O'Rourke could be accused, was his having received some shipwrecked Spaniards under his roof,—men, says O'Connor, whom the most hardened barbarity could scarcely consider as enemies. It is remarkable that O'Rourke previously to his execution was denied a priest of his own persuasion. But Miles Macgrath, the converted archbishop of Cashel, was sent to prevail on him to conform. "No," said O'Rourke firmly, "but do you remember the dignity from which you have fallen; return to the ancient Church, and learn from my fortitude the lesson you should have taught me, and which you ought to have been the last to disavow."

If there is a shadow of truth in this wild story of Leitrim, and if Rourke did not betray the lady, he deserves canonization. Essex, however, who shared the same fate, preserved the same honourable secrecy; and the purity of the Virgin Queen remains intact.

is the feast so humorously described by Mac Gauran.

"On O'Rourke's arrival at Whitehall, the Queen was ready to receive him. The elegant symmetry of his person, and his noble aspect, struck her Majesty, and she secretly determined to rank him with her choicest favourites. A sumptuous apartment was allotted him in the palace, and a train of domestics were ordered to attend him. One night, a female tapped at his door, and was readily admitted; but she retired before the morning broke. The lady continued her visits for several nights, always retiring about the same hour. O'Rourke's curiosity was awakened and he often urged her, but in vain, to disclose her name. At length he discovered, by the light of the moon, a ring on one of her fingers, which he observed with strict care, in the hope that it would lead to a discovery. Next day espying the identical ring on her Majesty's finger, he unfortunately insinuated

to her that he had discovered his fair visitor. The following night an assassin was employed to punish him for his idle curiosity." The public execution of O'Rourke is however on historical record.*

The fate of O'Neil, O'Rourke, and of O'Connor, who, to his own eternal disgrace,† had

* The ruins of O'Rourke's castle still exist. They are sublimely situated on a rock that hangs and frowns over a rapid river, near Manor Hamilton, in the county of Leitrim. A few trees are scattered immediately about the castle, and around are heathy mountains rising to the clouds. "O'Rourke's noble feast" has been rendered immortal by the translation of Dean Swift.

† O'Connor Sligo resided some time in the court of Elizabeth, where he was flattered up to his bent; though not into a permanent absenteeship. He returned to Ireland in 1596, after obtaining a grant to secure him in the possession of his own property; in gratitude for which "he was extremely active in her (the Queen's) favour, and gained back, partly

been lured over to the English court, was not calculated to encourage others, or to bring absenteeship into fashion. Even those, who from long sufferings, harassed spirits, and subdued energies, were desirous of peace and forgiveness at the expense of independence, were still afraid, from experienced treachery, "to come in," as the phrase was; and were unwilling to absent themselves from the fearful security of their woods and mountains, to which they were romantically attached.

Lord Deputy Mountjoy, in a curious letter to the English council, observes that "all the Irish that are now obstinate, are so only out of

by menace and partly by cunning, many of the revolted clans." The celebrated O'Donnel of Tirconnel, hearing of O'Connor's desertion from the common cause, marched with an army to bring him to obedience: and, in spite of the assistance of Sir Conyers Clifford and Lord Mayo, he ravaged and destroyed O'Connor's country.

their diffidence to be safe in forgiveness. They have the ancient swelling of liberty of their countrymen to work on, and they fear to be rooted out, and have their old faults punished upon particular discontents."

The plunder of Shane O'Neil, who, attainted, and driven beyond the pale of law and of humanity, died a miserable death, did not satisfy those who had benefited by his ruin. There was something too terrible to be endured in the name of these fierce toparchs of the North, who were still crowned in their stone chair, "with heaven for their canopy and earth for their footstool;" and when the young and gallant Hugh O'Neil, the last of his race, worthy of their illustrious descent, started up to claim his inheritance, his death or his absenteeship (a political decease) were the alternatives proposed to themselves by those who had so largely profited by the confiscation of the immense

property of his family. "In an Irish parliament," says Morrison, "O'Neil put up his petition, that by virtue of letters patent granted to his grandfather, his father, and their heirs, he might there (in parliament) have the place of Earl of Tyrone, and be admitted to his inheritance. The title and place were granted him:" but the inheritance was "reserved for the Queen's pleasure;" for the obtaining whereof, Sir John Perrot, (Lord Deputy,) upon O'Neil's promise of a great rent to be reserved to the crown, gave him letters of recommendation into England. There he well knew how to humour the court; for in the year 1587 he got the queen's letters patent for the earldom of Tyrone without any reservation of the rent he had promised.

Whatever was O'Neil's secret for "humouring the court," great efforts were made to fix him there as a permanent absentee; and the queen (who at the same time had the young

and unfortunate Earl of Desmond shut up in the Tower*) gave O'Neil a troop of horse, a pension of a thousand marks, and such proofs of her personal favour, as might have subdued a less energetic mind, and abated a less deep-seated feeling of patriotism and independence. But the young Irish Hercules soon became weary of the court of his middle-aged Omphale. He sought "*to do her Majesty service*" in Ireland by his influence over his countrymen, rather

* This youth was the only son of the Earl of Desmond, already mentioned. He had been detained a prisoner in the Tower from his infancy as a pledge for his father's loyalty. He was afterwards sent to Ireland as a state engine to play off against another Geraldine who had made claims to the forfeited Palatinate; but after he had fretted his hour on the bloody stage of his own country, he was brought back to England, and lingering at court for a few months in hopeless despondency, he died in the prime of his youth, of a broken heart.—*See Pacata Hibernia.*

than to submit to the bondage which he foresaw awaited his protracted residence in England. "He lived," says Morrison, "sometimes in Ireland and much at the court of England:" yet by degrees he abandoned the English court altogether; and, resuming his natural position in Ireland as Earl of Tyrone, he contrived to preserve the good opinion of his countrymen even while acting for the queen, "with all the alacrity of a faithful subject."

The reappearance of O'Neil in Ireland, his loyalty, and the queen's favour, threw the Irish government into utter consternation; and the Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, upon the execution of M'Mahon (who was put to death for an offence committed before the law which declared it capital had been enacted) let fall some speeches against the Earl of Tyrone (says Morrison) notwithstanding his late services,* "which

* Upon two occasions the Earl saved a large party of English from destruction. Macguire, chief of

speeches coming to the Earl's ears, were, as he afterwards said, the first causes which *moved him to misdoubt his safety*, and to stand upon his defence, now first combining with O'Donnel and other lords of the north, to defend their honour, estates, and liberties." The horrors which ensued during a civil war of ten years' duration, and which laid waste what Lord Verulam calls "the most miserable and desolate nation on

Fermanagh, had given the Lord Deputy three hundred cows to free his country from a sheriff; "after which bargain, the sheriff, one Willis, was let loose upon Fermanagh, leading about some hundreds of women and boys, with a guard of one hundred men, all living upon the spoils of the country." Maguire, having driven this model of a modern Irish police into a church, was about to put them to the sword, when the Earl of Tyrone interposed his authority. This same Willis was again rescued by Tyrone from an insurrection occasioned by similar circumstances in the O'Donnel's country.—*See Memorial to Queen Elizabeth.*

the face of the earth," produced the most effectual species of absenteeship; for it sent out of the world, those that were not driven by any other means out of the country; exterminating more than a third of the native population!

The queen, however, says Bacon, "sought not an extirpation, but a reduction;" but such was the *reduction*, that at the end of the war, when Lord Mountjoy received the submission of a few "well-disposed chiefs," he *disposed* of the others in a very summary way, "and by fire, famine, or sword, weakened or ruined most of those who still continued obstinate." Still, however, the master-blow of this deputy (who was after all one of the best Irish viceroys who served under the Tudors) was the ruin of the once magnanimous and invincible O'Neil. Having "taken the most of his fortresses, and what perhaps was more mortifying to him, having broken in pieces the chair of stone, wherein for many centuries the O'Neils of his family had

been invested with more than kingly authority, he obliged the unfortunate chief "to tender his submission on his knees before the Lord Deputy and the council, and in the presence of a great assembly; whereupon the Lord Deputy, in the Queen's name, promised the Earl for himself and his followers her majesty's gracious pardon." Is it wonderful that in the ensuing reign the O'Neils and the O'Donnels fled for ever from the scene of their sufferings and humiliation; or that having chosen Spain as the goal of their permanent absenteeship, they should have arrived there, only to die of broken hearts?

Remote as are the times, the events of which are here so slightly touched,—unfixed, capricious and despotic as were the government and the laws,—rude, wild, weak and disorganized as was the state of society,—yet, through the obscurity and confusion which hung over the neglected annals of the day, it is evi-

dent that absenteeism, sometimes encouraged or enforced by the English policy, was foreign to the national habits and natural temperament of the Irish; and that the aristocracy of the country were more than any other wedded to their native land by natural affection, by family pride, by power, by religion, and by every feeling and every prejudice which brightens or shadows the mixed and imperfect condition of humanity. Hitherto emigration had been the result of necessity or of despair; but it was reserved for the Stuarts, Ireland's direst foes, the flatterers of her foible, and the enemies of her rights, to give a spell to absenteeism, which even the policy and the despotism of the Tudors could not lend to it. When the rude home of the Irish had by the sanguinary crusades of Elizabeth been rendered no longer endurable, the Stuarts held out a lure and presented a blandishment which suffering humanity could not resist; and under an impulse, consecrated

by a mistaken sense of loyalty and chivalrous devotion, the long-enduring Irish rushed from the dreariness of their desolate abodes, and thronged to a court where they fancied they saw the representative of their native kings, seated on the throne of their foreign tyrants.

The drivelling and despotic pedant, James, with the true family instinct towards power, sought to win over that portion of his subjects whose religion preached "passive obedience and the divine right of kings," and with whom he had so deeply tampered in the reign of his predecessor. On his coming to the throne, he loaded the Irish with favours, while he withheld rights; but with a disingenuous and stupid policy, secretly counteracting the intentions of his own council, he privately led the Irish to an open assumption of religious privileges, which he permitted his ministers in Ireland to oppose, not only by remonstrance and proclamation, but by "fire and sword." To ingratiate himself still

further with the Irish gentry, and to break down whatever yet remained of devotion to their country, or of "the old swelling of liberty," inherited from their fathers, he invited the most distinguished among them to his court; where, "graciously received by the king," and incontinently ridiculed by the courtiers, they obtained the honour of being made the heroes of a court masque, in which the sarcastic laureate, Jonson, has handed down to posterity their devotion to "*the king's sweet faish,*" and the melancholy fact that they danced "*a fadan*" for the amusement of "*King Yamish;*" who, as the arch-patron of all buffoonery, doubtless chuckled over the degrading exhibition. How many Irish *absentees* have since danced "*the fadan,*" for the amusement of mystifying royalty!*

* The "Irish masque," got up to compliment the absentees at the English court, is either a bitter satire, or a disgusting picture of the state of Irish society at that epoch. "The King being seated

Thus prepared, by being "brayed as in a mortar" at home, and at once degraded and

(says *the programme*) in expectation, out ran a fellow attired as a citizen, after him three or four footmen, Denis, Donnel, Dermoch, and Patrick," the object of whose visit to London was not like that of many of the Denises and Patricks of the present day, to become either *porters*, or *reporters*, as the chances determined; but simply, as Donnel observes, 'to see King Yamish,' for which purpose 'they had travelled a great way miles,' having got the start of their lords or chiefs who had come over on the same loyal errand.

Der. I' fayt, tere ish very much plroyt stick here stirring to night. He takes ush for no shquires I tinke.

Pat. No; he tinksh not ve be imbasheters.

Der. No, fayt, I tinke sho too. But tish marriage bring over a doshen of our besht mashters to be merry, perht tee shweet laish, an't be; and daunsh a fading at te vedding.

Den. But tey vere leeke to daunsh naked, and pleash ty majesty; for tey villanous vild Irish sheas

flattered abroad, the Irish nobility but too willingly lent themselves to the allurements held

have 'casht away all ter fine cloysh; as many ash cosht a towsand cowes and garrans, I warrant tee.

Der. And te prishe of a cashtell or two upon teyr backs.

Don. And tey tell ty majesty, tey have ner a great fish now, nor a shea moynshter to save teyr cloyth alive now.

Pat. Nor a devoish vit a clowd to fesh'hem out o' te bottom o' te vayter.

Der. But tey musht eene come and daunsh in teyr mantles now; and show tee how tey can foot te fading and tē fadow, and te phip a' Dunboyne, I trow.

Don. I pree dee now, let not ty sweet faysh ladies make a mock on' him, and scorn to daunsht vit 'hem now, becash tey be poor.

Pat. Tey drink no bonny clabber, i' fayt now.

Don. It ish better ten usquebaugh to daunsh vit Patrick.

Pat. By my fater's hand, tey vill daunsh very vell.

out by Charles the Second; (the falsest of all their royal friends;) and from the epoch of the

Der. Ay, by St. Patrick, vill tey; for tey be nimble men.

Den. And vill leap ash light, be creesh save me, ash he tat veares te biggest fethur in ty court, King Yamish.

Der. For all tey have no good vindsh to blow tem heter, nor elementsh to preserve hem.

Don. Nor all te four cornersh o' te world to creep out on.

Pat. But tine own kingdomes.

Don. Tey be honesht men.

Pat. And goot men; tine own shubshects.

Der. Tou hast very good shubshects in Ireland.

Den. A great goot many, o' great good shubshects.

Don. Tat love ty mayesty heartily.

Den. And vill run t'rough fire and vater for tee over te bog and te bannoke, be te graish o' Got and graish o' King.

Der. By Got tey will fight for tee, King Yamish, and for my mistiesh tere.

Restoration absenteeship became a voluntary habit. It was then that what has been called the characteristic virtue of the Irish, became the source of one of their peculiar vices; and that the feeling of loyalty which had led them to follow the king in his misfortunes, and to embrace his almost hopeless cause in many a distant land, now once more lured them from their own, to "share the triumph and partake the gale" of his prosperity. The habits of a great capital and a gay court confirmed their taste for emigration, and excited a disgust for their native land, which became, in the end, as fatal to their interests as it was destructive of their patriotism. Then absenteeism became a species of national malady, a disease, infi-

Den. And my little maishter. Paish, paish, now room for our mayshter.—Then the gentlemen dance forth a dance in their Irish mantles to a solemn music of harps, which done, the footmen fall to speak again."

nitely more grievous in its effects than that terrible pestilence, which, a little before, in ravaging the population of Ireland, confined its mortal epidemia to a season and a generation.*

Absenteeism was no longer limited to the harassed Catholic gentlemen or loyal cavaliers, who came to seek the price of their sacrifice and their fidelity at the exchequer of royal gratitude, and found it, like that of the nation, closed by a fraudulent bankruptcy. The wealthy and the noble, the Protestant and the Papist, the English by blood, and the Scotch

* Borlase asserts that in 1650, ten years before the Restoration, 1700 died of the plague in Dublin alone; this horrible infliction was peculiar to those "picturesque times," which describe so well, and which, it is a mark of literary loyalty to admire and eulogize.

"Sir, nothing against antiquity, I pray you,
I must not hear ill of antiquity."—*B. Jonson.*

patentees; in a word, all who could afford to fly, now hastened to a court, where for a time an Irish mistress and an Irish minister held the ascendant; and where the Ormondes, the Ossorys, and the Villars, exchanged the honourable retreat of their own beautiful residences in Ireland, for the entresol of a royal villa at Newmarket, or "a lodging" in the harem of Whitehall.* Titles, and places, and

* The most noted beauties of the Court of Charles the Second, Lady Barbara Villars, (Duchess of Cleveland,) the Countess of Chesterfield, (a Butler,) the Lady Kildare, introduced by St. Evremont into his pleasant little poem of "The Basset Table,"* the Countess de Grammont, and many others, were Irish women. The delightful author of "Mémoires de Grammont," Anthony Hamilton, was himself an Irishman,† and a branch of the

* Vous ne me parlez pas de Madame de Kildare,
I never saw personne avoir meilleure air.

† His mother, the beautiful Lady Maria Butler, was daughter to the Duke of Ormonde.

pensions, and privileges, were then scattered among the Irish nobility, and became the pre-

illustrious house of Hamilton, which obtained from James the First such princely possessions in the North of Ireland, and which is still represented by the Marquis of Abercorn. The Fitzmaurices, (Muskerry,) the O'Briens, the Butlers, the Talbots, are names noted in the fasti of Whitehall at this period. With respect to the Talbots, however, it is but fair to observe that the elder branch of this ancient and patriotic family always remained permanently resident in their splendid castle and domain of Malahide, as their worthy representative the Member for the county of Dublin continues to do in the present day; though the younger branch, the Lords of Carton (now the seat of the Duke of Leinster) were prime favourites at Whitehall, and boon companions of both Charles and James. "The Dick Talbot" of that day, whom Charles would fain have set at odds with the Duke of Ormonde, brought no additional rays to the original splendour, when he added a ducal coronet to its less perishable honours. This Colonel Richard Talbot (afterwards Duke of Tirconnel) was sent to the

mium of absenteeism; paying the sacrifice of patriotism in one sex, and of honour in the other. The talent, beauty, and virtue, which, if concentrated at home, might have redeemed and adorned the country from whence they were drawn, now served but to increase the sum of elegant profligacy in that region, whose very atmosphere was as fatal to manly independence, as it was to female purity. Ireland, thus abandoned by the heads of her noble families, deserted by her rank, her talent, her beauty, and her education, pouring out the "*profits of the land to those who refunded no-*

Tower for having challenged the Duke of Ormonde with duplicity of conduct with respect to the Irish Catholics, whose agent Colonel Talbot then was. Ormonde, believing the better part of valour to be discretion, fought shy, instead of fighting Talbot; and when rallied on this circumstance by the King, petulantly demanded, "Is it then your Majesty's pleasure that at this time of day I should put off my doublet to fight duels with Dick Talbot?"

thing,"—unhappy Ireland, during the whole of the reign of Charles II. exhibited the most deplorable picture of a country left a prey to strangers, to undertakers, to patentees, to delegated powers, and official despotism; and of a society which, false in its position, and divested of all those ties and combinations which bind man to man, was totally destitute of every element that confers the strength of political cohesion, and disseminates the advantages of moral civilization.

In the midst of this anti-social chaos, every act of the legislature served to render the atoms of the system more jarring and discordant, until finally "the *Act of Settlement*," by unsettling every thing and rendering "confusion worse confounded," added insult to injury, and multiplied both the causes and the effects of absenteeism to the opulent of all sects. The country was now more than ever given up to a particular faction, which

made its powerful stand on the heights of ascendancy, under the sanction of a king who, in a great degree, owed his life and throne to those whom that ascendancy was to reduce to slavery and ruin.* It was at this period, more than any other, that the stale devices of Catholic conspiracies and Popish plots were re-

* It is farther particularly notable that James, the friend and correspondent of Pope Clement VIII. and the special protector of the Irish Catholics, first established in Ireland a Protestant ascendancy in parliament, in obedience to the advice of the Lord Deputy Chichester. With the inconsistency which ever accompanies a want of principle, he occasionally amused himself at the expense of the very people he affected to favour. When Chichester made King James a present of a beautiful horse, his Majesty asked him if it were an Irish horse: on being answered in the affirmative, the King swore his favourite oath, "Then it must be a Papist," for he verily believed that all things produced in Ireland were Papists, even the very animals themselves.

sorted to, as a means of startling a distant ignorant legislature into new acts of rigour, which, by crushing all that remained to be crushed, by forfeitures and penalties, was to elevate a factious minority of the nation to the supremacy of power and wealth.

The English Parliament, frightened, or pretending to be so, by the state of things in Ireland, published a proclamation "for the apprehension and prosecution of all Irish rebels," at a moment when Ireland had sealed by her best blood her devotion to the reigning dynasty; and the King, in the face of his pledged honour and royal promise, excluded from the act of indemnity (which was shortly after passed) more than two thirds of his Irish subjects, who had alone been faithful to him, when all else were false. While calumny and misrepresentation were thus working the destruction of Ireland abroad, there were none at home

to " remonstrate," as in the time of Elizabeth and James; none to protect or vindicate the national character, or to raise the dark veil, which the cupidity of domestic and predatory enemies had dropped over the injuries, the worth, and the misfortunes of the country. It is still more lamentable to add, that some of the most illustrious of the absentees, who haunted the Court as dependants, or influenced the Cabinet as counsellors, found it their account to sanction the misrepresentations, and to perpetuate a state of things by which the noble renegadoes were to be themselves the ultimate gainers. It is the effect of absenteeship to harden the heart against all the precious sympathies of patriotism, and it has ever been the practice of absentees to magnify and circulate the rumour of those national disorders which arise in part out of their own desertion of their native land, and which they suppose might

offer a reason, if not an excuse, for their abandonment of the soil and its interests.*

* None benefited more largely by these "plots of rebellion" than the house of Ormonde. "His Grace (says Lord Anglesey in his letter to the Earl of Castlehaven) his Grace (the Duke of Ormonde) and his family, by the forfeiture and punishment of the Irish, were the greatest gainers in the kingdom, and had added to their inheritance vast scopes of land, and a revenue three times greater than his paternal estate, as it was before the Rebellion, and most of his increase was out of their estates who adhered to the peace of 1648, or served under His Majesty's ensigns abroad." In the anonymous and curious pamphlet "The Unkind Deserter," it is asserted that the Ormonde estate was but 7000*l.* per annum before the civil wars in Ireland, and that in 1674 it was close upon 100,000*l.* a year; which increase arose from the King's grants to him "of other men's estates," &c. &c. &c. The history of the last Rebellion in 1798, and of the Union, would furnish many anecdotes of a similar increase of the wealth of Irish families; not indeed by forfeitures, (for the mode had passed,) but by intriguing and

The times, however, changed with the men, and the short reign of the unfortunate bigot James II. was pregnant with new and important events for Ireland. At the first temporary turn of the scale in Irish politics, absenteeism, which could scarcely increase, certainly did not diminish. By this change, the nation at large gained little; and the mean ambition of the nobility, who accepted power and place without one feeling of patriotism or sympathy for the coun-

bullying the government out of every place at its disposal, from a mitre to a cornetcy of dragoons,—by the wholesale and retail sale of the country: (a vote upon a single stage of a question has been hired, like a job-carriage, by the night;) by corrupt dabbling in every species of public work; in short, by every disgraceful practice of the fraudulent tradesman, the scheming adventurer, and the sturdy mendicant. The philosopher Kirwan was wont to quote a calculation he had made, that the money spent on carrying the Union, would have built a bridge from Howth to Holyhead.

try, was soon nipped in the bud, and for ever blasted, with the fortunes of the monarch, on whose favour it was founded.* The Irish gentry supported the cause of despotism and

* In James the Second's reign some of the measures were calculated to be of the greatest service to Ireland, and emanated from a wise and discreet minister, formerly attached to the Protestant interest, the second Earl of Clarendon. His instructions announced the intentions of the legislature, or at least of the King, to introduce Catholics into the corporations, and invest them with magistracies and judicial offices; and he gave his opinion in favour of the legality of the measure, though contrary to an Act of Elizabeth. But the greatest evil which can occur to a reformation, is to have it undertaken by men of small capacity; as their best intentions are ever marred by their petulance and dullness. The folly with which James hurried on a change, and the injudiciousness of some of the proposed measures, caused his own ruin, and that of the unhappy country he made the principal scene of his egregious weakness and incapacity.

bigotry in vain; and the impetuous imbecility of James served only to hasten that ruin, which public opinion had so deservedly prepared for him and his family. The mistaken adherence of the people to so bad a cause, was, in some measure redeemed by the disinterested fidelity with which they continued to serve that family in its adversity, which in prosperity had always repaid their services with ingratitude. It was the Irish (the ultra-royalists of all times) who, during the dark fortunes of the worthless *protégé* of the Bourbons, clung to him, when all else deserted him. They manned his navy, recruited his army, replenished his coffers, and took their stand around his person on their native soil; and when they saw him the first to fly,* they still erected his torn standard, and

* The Irish army under Tirconnel and Sarsfield made a most vigorous resistance against a superior and well-disciplined force; and Limerick, the last hold, was surrendered upon terms from which it

rallied in his cause,* paying the penalty of their generous but misapplied devotion to a bigot and a tyrant, by utter ruin, and eternal exile. The outlawry and confiscations of 1688 drove near four thousand Irishmen of family into a dreary and perpetual absenteeism, and sent them

appears that none more esteemed their valour and fidelity than King William himself.

* When James, after his flight from the battle of the Boyne, arrived in Dublin, he had the ingratitude and ungraciousness to reflect upon the cowardice of the Irish. He reached the Castle late at night, and was met at its gates by the Lady Lieutenant, the beautiful Duchess of Tirconnel, "La belle Jennings" of Grammont's Memoirs. In return for the sympathizing respect which marked her reception, the King is said to have sarcastically complimented her upon the "alertness of her husband's countrymen." The high-spirited beauty replied, "In that, however, your Majesty has had the advantage of them all." The King, in fact, was among the first to arrive in the capital with the news of his own defeat.

to dole out for a pitiful hire, in the cause of oppression in other countries, the same valour, and the same spirit, which their fathers had displayed in support of the liberty of their own.

The sale of the estates of these unfortunate and involuntary absentees,* under the authority of the English parliament, changed a large portion of the Irish population, and introduced a new race of landed proprietors, whose interest it was *to stay at home.* The tide of absenteeship received a powerful check from the necessity of circumstances. Those Irish Catholics, who had escaped detection, or were exempt from suspicion, retired to their remote patrimonial domains, and sought safety in obscurity; hoping, by remaining peaceably at home, to escape the notice of a government which had sprung out of a revolution they had so lately

* They were estimated at the annual sum of two hundred and eleven thousand six hundred pounds.

opposed. The Protestants likewise found it their interest to remain the vigilant guardians of the new possessions they had recently acquired, and of the old, which they had so bravely protected. All parties were either impoverished or unsettled; and few had the means, if they had the desire, to remove from a scene of ferment and desolation, to one of security and enjoyment. For the Irish of any sect or race, there was then no resting-place.

While England gained every thing by a revolution, which she owed to the moral and political education acquired during a century of struggle for civil rights and religious freedom, Ireland lost nearly all she had left to lose through her deficiency in these endowments, resulting from many centuries of anarchy and misrule. The picture, sketched by a master-hand, of the condition of affairs at this singular epoch, is full of a fearful and melancholy interest. "By the total reduction of the kingdom of Ireland in 1691," says Burke, "the

ruin of the native Irish, and in a great measure of the first race of the English, was completely accomplished. The new interest was settled with as solid a stability as any thing in human affairs can look for. All the penal laws of that unparalleled code of oppression which were made after the last event, were manifestly the effects of national hatred and scorn towards a conquered people, whom the victors delighted to trample upon, and were not at all afraid to provoke. They were not the effects of their fears, but of their security. They who carried on this system looked to the irresistible force of Great Britain for their support in their acts of power. They were quite certain that no complaints of the natives would be heard on this side of the water, with any other sentiments than those of contempt and indignation. Their cries served only to augment their torture. Machines which could answer their purposes so well must be of an excellent contrivance. Indeed, at that time, in

England, the double name of the complainants, Irish and Papists, (it would be hard to say singly which was the most odious,) shut up the hearts of every one against them. Whilst that temper prevailed in all its force to a time within our memory, every measure was pleasing and popular, just in proportion as it tended to harass and ruin a set of people who were looked upon as enemies to God and man; and, indeed, as a race of bigoted savages, who were a disgrace to human nature itself."*

In spite, however, of religious intolerance †

* Letter to Sir H. Langrish.

† Of this intolerance William stands in a great measure acquitted. His known liberality subjected him to the suspicions of the party who forged the penal statutes for Ireland, and who accused him of infidelity, because he was unwilling to become a persecutor. When left to act for himself, he exhibited a wisdom, wanting in the measures of those to whom he was occasionally obliged to submit. In his instructions to the commissioners in Scotland,

and civil disqualification—of statutes which render commerce a crime, and laws which made industry penal.*; of abuses of power numerous

dated 1689, he says expressly, "You are to pass an act establishing that church government which is most agreeable to the inclinations of the people."

* To favour the English manufacturer, the exportation of the staple commodity and manufacture of Ireland (wool) was prohibited on pain of confiscation, imprisonment, and transportation!! It would be difficult to say whether the infamy or the absurdity of such legislation is the greatest; and indignation at the avarice of the lawgivers, is so largely mixed with contempt for their blind ignorance, that the pen pauses in its vituperation of measures which were so obviously their own punishment. Be it however remarked "*en passant*," that the framers of these laws were the aristocracy of England, the most educated and moral people then in existence; a striking proof of the perfect inadequacy of abstract principles of right and wrong to the good government of conduct. Force, and force alone, too generally makes right, in opinion, as well as in fact; and where the power to abuse exists, the will to in-

under William, and quadrupled under the last of the Stuarts and the first of the Brunswicks, still something like a counterpoise was found to balance these political evils in the *home residence of the educated gentry*, and in the political bustle and activity of an Irish Parliament. As soon as the positive calamities of war and confiscation ceased, as soon as an approach was made to European habits and policy, and industry was permitted to find a scope and a reward for its exertions, the nation made a sudden and a rapid progress in civilization and comfort, simply through the efficiency of its own resources, and the demands of its own market. It was in vain that the talismanic words "Irishman" and "Papist" were employed to arm passion and prejudice against the country; it was in vain that commercial jealousy threw

jure and the sophistry to justify the injury, will never long be wanting.

shackles round its infant manufactures. In spite of these and many other obstacles, the moral strength of a country always distinguished for the natural endowments of its population,* rose superior to the cruel pressure of its political inflictions; and the domestic activity and intellectual improvement of the people—slow and limited as they appear, when compared with the advances of the sister kingdom—proceeded with a rapidity little short of miraculous, under so stultifying a system of legislation and government. It was then that the light of national genius concentrated its long-scattered rays to a

* "Have they any wit in their compositions? (says Spenser in speaking of the poetry of the Irish in his day.) Yea, truly, I have caused divers of them to be translated unto me, that I might understand them; and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention, sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their natural device, which gave good grace and comeliness to them."

point, and shining steadily from its proper focus, threw out those inextinguishable sparks of moral lustre,

"——Which are wont to give
Light to a world and make a nation live."

It was then that the powerful collision of active, ardent, and energetic minds produced that brilliant burst of talent which, for something more than a century, flung over the political darkness of the land a splendour to which her struggles and her misfortunes served only to give a stronger relief and more brilliant effect. It was then that, after ages of mental depression, which the song of the Irish bard but deepened into a more poetical sadness,* the Irish intellect broke

* "Oh wretched condition of our loved compatriots, the remains of a once happy people, steeped in blood and drenched in slaughter! Vain is your struggle for liberty, hapless crew of a bark long tempest-tossed, and now cast away for ever. What! are we

out, like the Irish rebellion, "threescore thousand strong," when none expected or were prepared for the startling and splendid irruption. The old mart of learning was re-opened to the erudite of Europe, as in those times, when if a sage was missing, it was said "*emandatus est ad disciplinam in Hibernia;*" and the rich stream of native humour which, like a caverned river, had hitherto kept the "noiseless tenor of its way," darkened by impending shadows, now

not wrecked on our own shores, and prisoners to the Saxons? Is not the sentence passed and our excision foredoomed? How are ye fallen from the ancient glories of your native land! Power degraded into weakness, beauty to deformity, freedom into slavery, and the song of triumph into elegies of despair. Nial, of the nine hostages, look not down upon us, lest thou blush for thy captive Gadhelians. Conn, of the hundred battles, sleep in thy grass-grown tomb, nor upbraid our defeats with thy victories."—*Oran* (or song) *of Ognive, the family bard of the last of the O'Neils.*

rushed forth with the rapidity of a torrent, pure, sparkling, and abundant, at the first vent afforded to its progress. Science and philosophy now first raised their altars amidst the monkish monuments of an antiquated institution, and benefited the world by theories and by experiments originated in a land where public opinion and private faith were still struggling under the ban of legal proscription.* England then opened a running account with Ireland for dramatic contributions when her own resources had, by being too largely drawn upon, nearly become bankrupt;† and literary Europe stood indebted

* Boyle, Berkeley, King, Dodwell, Leslie, Toland, Clayton, (Bishop of Clogher,) Molyneux, (the friend of Locke the philosopher and champion of Irish independence,) Helsham, Robinson, Macbride, Sullivan, Hutchinson, Abernethy, Harris, Keating, Leland, Kirwan, Young, (Bishop of Clonfert,) &c. &c.

† Even so far back as the reign of James the First, Ireland began to furnish her quota to the English drama. But from the middle of the seventeenth

to Irish wit, fancy, and humour, for the richest treats, which render the leisure of the learned delectable, and the amusement of the idle instructive.*

century to something more than the middle of the eighteenth, she produced almost all the best dramatic writers on the British stage: Congreve, Howard, Southerne, Steele, Farquhar, Phillips, Kelly, Jones, Orrery, (Earl of,) Tate, Concanen, Dobbs, Bickerstaff, Brook, Centlivre, Griffiths, Jephson, Murphy, Macklin, O'Hara, West, Goldsmith, Sheridan, &c. &c. And among the actors, Wilks, Quin, Sheridan, Barry, Mossop, Macklin, Havard, O'Brien, Brown, Woffington, Clive, Fitzhenry, &c.

* Denham, Parnell, Swift, Sterne, Burke, Goldsmith, the Sheridans; to whom may be added Molesworth, Millar, Wood, Webb, Pilkington, Johnson (Chrysal), &c. &c. Even the women no longer deemed it the exclusive purpose of their being

"To suckle fools and chronicle small-beer;"

and the elegant and witty productions of Mesdames Millar, Pilkington, Centlivre, Grierson, Griffiths, Sheridan, Barker, Brook, contributed to the general stock of national literature.

Even the arts, in these stirring times of social concentration, awakened from their long and deadly slumbers; and the slowly reviving school of painting in England received some of its most noted disciples from Ireland, a country so little adapted, by its miseries and its commotions, to the cultivation of the most tranquil and meditative of intellectual pursuits.* At this time, too, the Irish muse found a willing and a worthy priestess in one of the fair daughters of the land,† where her temples had so long been closed; and "the mother of sweet singers," awakened by the genius of national melody, beheld her sons

"Thronging round her magic cell,"

* Jervas, (Pope's Raphael,) Bindon, Roberts the landscape-painter, Barrett, &c.

† Miss Brook, the elegant translator and composer of the "Relics of Ancient Irish Poetry."

as in the days of the Mayos* and the O'Connors.†

The Lord Mayo, of the early part of the eighteenth century, here alluded to, was a model of the genuine Irish resident nobleman, living in his rural palace, surrounded by his family, his bards, and musicians. One of these, "his retainer," David Murphy, composed an Irish Ode of some celebrity, called "Tiagherna Mhaigho," the "Lord of Mayo," which another of his retainers, O'Keeneghan, set to music. This Carolan was wont to play at night in the hall of the Burkes, on his harp. It happened that during Carolan's last visit to Lord Mayo, Geminiani arrived from Italy by special invitation from the amateur Earl; and his Italian music completely usurped the attention of the Ladies Susan and Bridget Burke, of whose praise Carolan was especially jealous, and he frankly complained to his noble host of this neglect. Lord Mayo, rallying the bard on his feelings, concluded by telling him, that when he should produce the same music as Geminiani, he would meet with the same atten-

The triumphs of Carolan, the last of the Fir-sgealaighthes or Irish Troubadours, were followed by those of Handel and Piccini;* and though the wild sweet tones of the Irish harp were still occasionally heard in the pauses of

tion. On this Carolan proposed a wager, that he on his harp would follow the Italian in any piece of his composition, but that Geminiani should not follow him through an Irish planxty: the wager was accepted by the Italian, and won by the Irish bard.

† The O'Connors of Ballingar, the favourite residence of Carolan.

* "In the year 1740, the sublime genius of Handel roused our feelings from the lethargy into which they had fallen."—*Memoirs of the Irish Bards.*

Banished from London by the intrigues of a party, Handel* fled to Ireland, where, with his

* Pope alludes to this banishment of Handel in his Dunciad:

"Strong in new arms, lo! Giant Handel stands
Like bold Briareus with his hundred hands,—&c. &c. &c.
Arrest him, Goddess, or you sleep no more:
She heard, and drove him to Hibernia's shore."

the Messiah and of the elegant Armida, still, taste, improving with the developement of the art, soon rendered the Italian and German schools of music the exclusive study in Ireland; and they excited an enthusiasm which well belonged to a people who, in all their wretchedness and degradation, had found in music a vehicle for their feelings and their passions, for their deep-seated indignation, and their long-meditated revenge. St. Bridget now hid her diminished head in her "cell of the oak;"* while St. Cecilia saw more tapers light-

friend Dubourg, the violin of his age, he was received with rapture. His first public exhibition in Dublin was the Messiah, which he performed for the benefit of the city prisons. Whoever had the happiness of knowing the late Richard Kirwan, the Irish philosopher, may judge of the enthusiasm of the travelled Irish gentlemen for Italian music, and the vogue which Piccini obtained through their means.

* St. Bridget was accustomed to pray under the

ed at her shrine in the Irish capital than ever illumined her dusky chapel in the Trastevere at Rome.* Music halls were built for public concerts; and musical societies, assuming the importance and dignities of corporate bodies, were formed out of the amateur* and professional talent of the country; while the conciliating genius of harmony, refusing that "to a party which was meant for mankind," devoted its divine powers to smoothing political austerities, reknitting the social affections, and promoting the first of all human virtues—charity.† "Oh!

shade of an oak, a circumstance which has given its name to an Irish county, Cil doire, the cell of the oak (Kildare.)

* "Concerts were the favourite amusement in the houses of the nobility and gentry, and musical societies were formed in all the great towns."—*Memoirs of Irish Bards.*

† The Philharmonic Society gave up its subscriptions towards building the hospital in Townsend-street, 1753.

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surely this was the true purpose for which the Divinity breathed into the soul of man that fine susceptibility to the mystic charm of harmony, which lulls the harsher passions, and substitutes the excitement of delicious sensations for the bitter feelings and harassing emotions which the cross purposes of life call hourly into existence. Who now in Ireland but may look back with regret to the philharmonic societies "of other times," from the magic of whose strains a shelter rose for the wretched, and in whose bands men of all parties blended the "concord of sweet sounds." Who that in the present day has witnessed in the capital of Ireland, the different and dark purposes to which music and musical society have been perverted, but must lament that the sweetest of the arts should have been pressed into the service of civil dissension—should have fulfilled the purposes of party intrigue, and gratified the malice of a narrow-souled faction. Who but must

shudder to perceive its influence directed to rousing the irritable fibre, and stirring up the bile of political malady; to exciting by its "musical cheers" the passions of the powerful few against the suffering many, and fomenting by its choicest harmonies the discord of social disunion and the dissonance of party hatred. Spirits of Handel and of Arne, of Calcott and of Mozart, how little did ye dream in your philosophy that your heaven-inspired strains should serve as the war-whoop of faction, the death-song of domestic peace, and national confraternity!!

While music excited in Ireland the same enthusiasm, and was cultivated with more science, than when "in early Greece she sung," the drama partook of the triumph. Two royal theatres and an Italian opera-house* could

* "Italian singers were invited over, and the fair dames of Ireland learned to expire at an opera"—*History of Irish Music.*

scarcely supply the cravings of the public taste; and an audience, noted for its critical acumen, gave to the Irish stage a classical character, and developed a competition which drew forth candidates for dramatic fame even from the higher classes of society, conferring that respectability upon the members of the stage, which ought at all times to belong to a profession which holds so decided an influence over the morals and the manners of a nation.*

But though the circumstances of the times rendered the home residence of the Irish gentry more permanent than it has since ever been, or

* Barry, Sheridan, Mossop, Diggs, Daly, Crawford, and others of a more modern date, were all gentlemen of family, and members of the Irish University. They lived with their own class, and some of them went to court. The intimacy of Sheridan with successive lords lieutenant is recorded in the life of his celebrated wife, written and recently published by their accomplished granddaughter.

perhaps ever was before, the fashion universally prevailed of sending the youth of good family to make the grand tour; and the young and travelled aristocracy, the Fitzgeralds, the Caulfields, the Kirwans, the O'Neils, the Blakes, came back, no less to improve the tastes of their country, than to defend her cause, and to enlarge the sphere of her energies. A variety of refined amusements and elegant enjoyments, hitherto unknown in Ireland, came in their suite; which while they gave employment and food to the lowly and the industrious, tended to disseminate that taste for factitious pleasures, and that craving for refined gratifications, which though not in themselves the efficient causes of civilization, are in no small degree favourable to its developement.* Pleasure, lured to the Irish

* If a desire for luxuries and refinements is in all classes the natural check to excessive population, and to the degradation of the species, that check

shores from distant regions, planted her gay standard, and raised her brilliant pavilions in the capital, at that time crowded with the wealthy and the educated. The ridottos of the music hall, with their fantastic arrangements and sylvan scenery,* recalled the similar festivities of the Italian carnival. Palaces succeeded to

is wholly wanting in Ireland. Not only the peasant, but the tradesman sees no attainable object of enjoyment in the possession of a class just above himself in ease and comfort, which might stimulate his ambition. The connecting link between the rich and the poor is wanting; for middlemen are no refiners of manners. As a familiar illustration, let the reader imagine that, except in towns of the first class, few vegetables beyond a cabbage or a potatoe are to be found in the market. There is absolutely no demand for such *luxuries* to repay the culture.

* One of these rooms painted in fresco and highly decorated, remains, or did remain a few years back, in Fishamble-street.

the cumbrous mansions of the seventeenth century; and Charlemont house, with its beautiful architecture, its splendid library, and invaluable collections, still preserved in all their integrity by the present noble owner, stands a singular monument not only of the pure taste and magnificent spirit of an Irish nobleman, who had even higher claims to the admiration and respect of his country, but of the genius of the times, and the prosperity—the short-lived prosperity—of the land in which such a private edifice was raised. The villas of Tuscany and Lombardy were repeated along the shores of a bay that wanted only a Vesuvius to rival that of Naples; and the names which these pretty villas still bear, recal the travelled tastes of their elegant founders.* Private theatricals

* Marino, Frescati, Marli, Sanssouci, Tivoli, Bellevue, Maritimo, &c. are curious monuments of the manners and feelings of the Irish nobility of the eighteenth century.

(the dramatis personæ taken from the red book) were got up in the castles of the O'Neils and the halls of the Butlers; and the public assemblies, held under the newly-raised dome of the Rotunda, were types of the *casino nobile* of Florence and Bologna;* while the Sunday evening promenades in its illuminated gardens contributed to the funds of a blessed charity, and bestowed that health and those spirits, without which the kindlier feelings are too frequently blighted, and the generous propensities absorbed in a querulous and fretful egoism.†

* Concerts were given in this room twice a week, for the benefit of the Lying-in Hospital, to which it is an appendage. Previously to its erection, these musical meetings were held for the same purpose in a long room in Granby-row, where Castruci, the last pupil of Corelli, performed.—See *Memoirs of Irish Bards.*

† The refinement not to say dissipation, of this period was perhaps precocious and disproportionate to the riches of the country; but this circumstance,

The Irish press!—and who that now knows the capital of Ireland, and beholds its utter incompetency to support the publication of even *one* trifling periodical work, will believe that Ireland once *had a press!*—the Irish press then teemed with native literary productions; which if as mere "*pieces de circonstance,*" thrown off at a heat, they might sometimes want the higher finish of more elaborated composition, were still stamped with the ardour of the national spirit, and "faithful to its fires." The frequent and "keen encounter of the wits" upon great questions, produced an animated competition, which even the statesman-like so-

always perhaps inherent in a particular stage of civilization, was in Ireland increased by peculiarities in the distribution of national wealth, another fatal consequence of the frequent forfeitures. Time, however, would have cured this evil, if the tide of absenteeship had not again set in, and swept away all improvement and prosperity from the land.

briety of English viceroys could not always resist. The Draper's letter of Lord Chesterfield, (an imitation of Swift,) and the political caricatures of Lord Townshend, written at a later period, were proofs that Ireland was not always governed by the dull and the dogged, and that her metropolis once boasted of a society which *obliged* the representatives of majesty as well as the representatives of the people to cultivate the suffrages of the public, by means never addressed to an uncivilized or an illiterate community. Politics and polemics then alike fell to the discussion of humour and talent. The public journals, though few, were fair; their editors were responsible both by their property and their personal consideration; and their contributors were frequently the most brilliant members of Irish society, the most learned sons of the Irish alma mater. Swift, Dr. Sheridan, Lucas, Flood, Burgh, Yelverton, Courtenay, Jephson, Bishop Marley, Grattan,

Curran, and others equally notable, if not equally noted, contributed successively a portion of their luminous intellects to illustrate the pages of that mighty engine of public feeling—the PERIODICAL PRESS. Whatever side was advocated,—the country or the court, patriotism or power,—it does not appear that any journal was set up on a merely sordid principle, or an utter disregard of all truth and decency. There was then no waylaying with indiscriminate ruffianism the feelings of private individuals, no exhibition of the sacred details of the domestic life of political characters, as a means of existence to some outcast of society, who wanted the courage to seek a less dishonourable bread on the public highway. For when the genuine and educated gentry of Ireland, her hereditary senators and native legislators, made up the larger portion of the reading public of her capital, a journal edited by the nefarious and the base, by the hired assas-

sin of reputation or the paid pander of ribald passions, would have been hunted down with one common feeling of national indignation and manly contempt. Where is the land, so lost in its degradation, so insensible to all its higher interests, as to endure that such a "damning witness" should go forth to the world and bear testimony to its moral, social, and literary depravity? Alas that there should be one! Alas that the land of wit and feeling should furnish forth readers, even from its high and official classes, to reward and encourage the instruments of its own disgrace! Alas for the country, where the hired servants of the government club their quota to propagate the rancorous overflowings of the vilest and most antisocial passions; where the ordained ministers of religion, subscribe for the dissemination of the grossest and most mischievous falsehoods; where the magistrate chuckles privately over the libel he is publicly bound to punish; and

where to be pre-eminent in villainy and matchless in audacity, is the short road to command sympathy and ensure subsistence.

But if a reduction of absenteeism, if the permanent residence of the major part, of the wealth, the nobility, and above all, and more precious than all, of the EDUCATION of the country, produced these blessed effects, the greater good, the "last best gift," which congregated interests and intellects could bestow on a community, Public Spirit, fell like dew in the desert upon the renovating nation. Men who had long learned to feel and to think, now, in the consciousness and confidence of their associated strength, first ventured to speak and to act: at once inspiring and inspired, they spoke as prophets and acted as patriots. The talent of the free suddenly burst into existence, as if by a divine miracle in the land of the enslaved; and eloquence, the inherent characteristic of the nation, which had occasionally

broken forth in the rude but exciting harangues of the O'Donnels and the O'Neils, now shone out brilliantly, with a lustre which Athens in her best, and Rome in her greatest days, scarcely surpassed. Political oratory and political knowledge, proceeding from the same cause and bearing on the same point exhibited Ireland in a new aspect to the wondering world; and the names of Molyneux,* Ponsonby,†

* It has been said with great truth that "the politics of Molyneux long continued to be no less revered by the Irish than the morality of Confucius by the Chinese." The burning of his excellent work, the "Case of Ireland," the prosecution of Swift's "Drapier's Letters," and the imprisonment of his spirited publisher, Faulkner, had the great merit of bringing the doctrine of libel into public discussion, and of first awakening the people of Ireland to the value of the liberty of public speaking and writing, the most important of the many blessed constitutional rights extorted from power at the Revolution. It is pleasant to observe, that

Prior,* Boyle,‡ Connolly,‖ Tottenham,§ Lucas, Charlemont, Burke, Grattan, Curran—names

patriotism becomes an heir-loom, and to note that the immediate descendant of William Molyneux, who inherits his principles with his property and name, is a permanently resident Irish gentleman!

† John Ponsonby, Speaker of the House of Commons in 1756, under whom the Irish patriots made a most successful stand on a constitutional question of vital importance. The energy and firmness of the patriotic Speaker, and of a majority of the members of the House of Commons, who then ("Hear this, ye gods, and wonder how ye made them") attended to the business of their country, forms a brilliant feature in the history of the times.

* The friend of the celebrated Berkeley, a right good Irishman and author of a "List of Absentees," a class, to which he showed no quarter.

‡ Henry Boyle, the patriot of the Irish House of Commons in the early part of the eighteenth century.

‖ Connolly died Speaker of the House in 1730, lamented by all who loved Ireland; Sir R. Walpole

which are now but sounds—will retain to the latest posterity their mystical and magic influence, as the signs of times and events, the glory of a nation's history, and as the evoquing spells of that genius, which awakens liberty and watches over a nation's happiness. Oh! these were times to live in and men to live among—when the capital of the kingdom was something better than a garrison or an assize town! when its fashionable assemblies were not thrown upon the eleemosinary contributions of barracks and boarding-schools, of military exquisites who "*never dance,*" and harmless young gentlemen who do nothing else! These

gave him the name of "King of the Irish Commons," from his astonishing influence over the Lower House.

§ Member for New Ross. On an important political question he rode post to town sixty miles to be present at the debate, and arrived just in time to give his vote.

were times, when the men were all at home, and their spirits all abroad! when the rush from the senate was sure to fill the drawing-room; and they who boldly fought in the one for the liberties of their country, came to lay their own liberty at the feet of beauty in the other. These were times, when even love and law went forth arm in arm together from the inns of court, to *that* court, where the special pleading of counsel rarely failed to win the cause, where even losses were victories, and where the inconsiderate heart of the young legal aspirant selected its client for life without reference to politics, place, pension, or promotion. Then Leinster-house, and Charlemont-house, and Powerscourt-house, and Waterford-house, and Moira-house, and an hundred other splendid "*houses*" of the resident nobility, were open to the wit, the talent, the literature, and the gallantry of the country. Then, the cells of the University, silent as the tomb during the studious day, echoed at night to the

song, the laugh, the epigram, or the jest of gay and brilliant spirits destined to come forth and enchant society by their social and colloquial powers; while they defended the independence of their country by their eloquence and patriotism. These were times when the charms of the lovely Gunnings, the more lovely Munroes,* and an hundred others of their lovely successors, were embalmed for posterity in the verses of contemporary poets; and when the amatory sonnets of one of the first orators of the age were not deemed inferior to his speeches at the bar, or his orations in the senate.† These were times when the young

* Dolly Munroe, the reigning Irish beauty of Goldsmith's day, to whom he alludes in his Haunch of Venison:

"'Twas a neck and a breast that might rival
Munroe's."

† See some of Right Hon. John Philpot Curran's Verses preserved in his Life by his son William Henry Curran—a work full of interest with respect

ladies of the capital did not wait for the *marching in* of the divisions of a regiment, as their only chance of *marching out* of the ranks of celibacy; for absenteeship was then but temporary: the young nobility and gentry, if they travelled and flirted abroad, came back to love and to marry at home; since, "where'er they roamed, whatever climes" they saw, they still saw nothing fairer than the fair they left behind them. These were times, which, when recalled, like Ossian's Song of Sorrow, are both "pleasing and mournful to the soul."

But to return. When penal statutes and all that is intended by the false policy of shallow

to matter, and full of beauty with respect to style. The account given in its pages, of the convivial and intellectual meetings of "the Monks of the Screw" at the Priory (Mr. Curran's villa) forms a brilliant but painful contrast to other orgies now celebrated in Dublin, which alas! are neither social nor intellectual!

and self-interested legislators to disqualify man for the knowledge and assertion of his political rights, still continued to check the progress of civil liberty in Ireland, the combined effects of a portion of the liberal and educated resident gentry were found sufficient to make head against a government which the sternest upholder of English power, and he too an Irish chancellor,* declared "was enough to crush any nation upon earth;" and which one of the wisest and best philanthropists of that or any age† has defined to have been "such a combination of rapine, treachery, and violence as would have disgraced the name of government in the most arbitrary country in the world." Other events, bearing upon the same point, tended at this epoch to soften, if not to remedy the evils of that terrific code, which disgraced England even more than it degraded Ireland.‡

* Lord Clare. † Dr. Franklin.

‡ The penal laws had been multiplied and rigo-

While the church militant in Ireland usurped a power in the persons of its Protestant popes, the primates and archbishops, which smelt of the times of the Beckets and the Wolseys,—while Boulter and Stone preserved their own supremacy by their well-sustained system of dividing Ireland within herself, and adding to her restrictions by fomenting her discontents,—it *did* happen that the necessity of circumstances occasionally procured for the country a chief governor, whose personal interests in the land from which he drew his maintenance and support, awakened "some bowels for a poor

rously executed under George the First. On the accession of George the Second, for the first time since the Revolution, the unfortunate Catholics, who by a feeble and foolish fiction of the law of the land, were "not supposed to exist," ventured to approach the throne by a public act of their body; and they presented an address of congratulation at once dignified and loyal.

relation," or whose higher order of genius and generalized views raised him above the level of the miserable local politics, the petty cabals, and factious intrigues of that remote and wretched spot which is, in position as in politics, the *cul de sac* of civilized Europe. These happy incidents indeed were rare, and make but a poor set-off in the balance, of vice-regal virtue and talent, against the dulness, bigotry, and ostentatious pretension, which have so often covered their Midas' ears under the coronet of delegated sway.

It was under a Devonshire that the susceptible Irish, always led by personal feelings, first began to rally with confidence and hope round a government that seemed to abate in the execution, if not in the spirit of the law, something of that sanguinary reign which had hitherto chilled loyalty into despair; and the personal qualities of this great Irish proprietor were productive of the most felicitous effects, at the

most fearful epoch in the reign of the house of Hanover. The Stuarts, the abdicated, the Catholic Stuarts, had planted their standard on the English and Scottish shores, and the English and the Scotch, to a dangerous amount, rushed from all parts to support the principles of Toryism, in the person of him who was the "brief abstract" of all Toryism. Where then in this moment of frightful exigency, when empire, liberty, and life were at stake, where then were those "*enfans de la revolution*," the Protestant princes of Brunswick, the defenders of the faith of Luther, to look for the rally of defence, for the protection of loyalty against Catholic oppression? It was to the native Irish, the Catholic Irish! that England, in the face of of her own savage laws,* turned for aid against British rebellion; and while the Irish gentry of all sects remained immutably true to their legi-

* Forbidding Catholics to bear arms either by sea or land.

timate (or according to modern doctrines their *illegitimate*) sovereign, the flower of the Catholic population rushed forth to man the navy and recruit the army, which was to make a stand against successful rebellion,—successful at least for a time, in every part of the British islands save alone in Ireland.

Still, however, in this moment of fearful exigency, when the old idols of Irish devotion were again presenting themselves to a susceptible people in all the charm of struggle and misfortune, something more than the mild wisdom which the gentle blood of Cavendish has always produced, was deemed necessary to watch over Catholic Ireland; and one was chosen suited to meet the difficulties of the day, and to carry on that system of conciliation begun by the Duke of Devonshire. This one was Philip Stanhope Earl of Chesterfield, who, as the "Mirror of (Irish) Magistrates," in which succeeding chief governors of Ireland should "dress themselves," merits a particular notice.

This nobleman, who had been for ten years in opposition, was selected more in necessity than in liking: and he with difficulty obtained an audience of leave from reluctant Majesty, on his departure for his viceroyalty. When he demanded in the closet, "his Majesty's commands," he was coolly told that he had already received his instructions, and was dismissed without any token of confidence or of courtesy. While the ministry put him forward as an instrument of conciliation, and loaded him with the responsibility of a difficult government, they wished to retain in their own hands the substance of power, and to shackle him with some creature of their own, in the character of secretary; but he laughed at the intrigue, and in their despite chose for himself one, whom he describes to his son as "a very pretty young fellow, who knew nothing of business;" for he was determined to rule by himself, to see with his own eyes, and to encounter no subaltern in-

te.ference with the system he chose to adopt. Such was the spirit in which Lord Chesterfield entered on his arduous mission, and ascended the vice-regal throne of Ireland, on which he was placed by that influence to which even kings and ministers must sometimes submit,—the influence of circumstances! Docile mediocrity, the ordinary qualification of an Irish Lord Lieutenant, was now no longer adequate to meet the exigencies of the hour, as in those times of comparative tranquillity, when any stalking-horse of diplomacy might be led over the beaten course by some self-sufficient political jockey with the name of chief secretary; who, without the pageantry of the higher office, monopolized all its patronage and exercised more than its powers. At this moment dangers both internal and external called for qualities of a different order, and the English government was driven to the desperate resource of accepting the aid of great abilities, at the expense of abiding by the deci-

sions of untrammelled independence. Such was the moment at which George the Second disdainfully appointed one of the cleverest men of his empire to the government of Ireland; and to this involuntary election he probably owed that he was not himself sent back "to give his little senate laws" in his patrimonial estate of Hanover.

It was in vain that "Popery and the Pretender"* was the cry *mille fois repeté* in the ears

* When Lord Chesterfield arrived in Ireland, all the Catholic places of worship were closed. A Mr. Fitzgerald saying mass in the obscure garret of a condemned house, an immense crowd had assembled, and the floor giving way, the officiating priest with many of his flock were buried in the ruins, and the greater number were maimed or wounded. Lord Chesterfield, horror-struck at the event, ordered that all the chapels in the capital should be opened on St. Patrick's day, and they have never since been closed.

A zealous Protestant thinking to pay his court to

of this new and singular Lord Lieutenant,—that the old measures of the Boulters and the Stones were proposed as the golden rules of vice-regal

the Lord Lieutenant, came to inform him that one of his coachmen was a Roman Catholic, and went privately to mass. "Does he, indeed?" said his Lordship, "then I shall take care that he never drives me there."—*Chesterfield's Memoirs.*

The Bishop of Waterford relates that the vice-treasurer, Mr. Gardiner, a man of good character and considerable fortune, waited upon Lord Chesterfield, one morning, and in a great fright told him that he was assured upon good authority that the people in the province of Connaught were actually rising; upon which the Viceroy looked at his watch, and with great composure answered him, "It is nine o'clock, and time for them to rise; I believe, therefore that your news is true." This system of alarm, be it observed, continues in all its vigour to the present day; and the actual Viceroy has to withstand the falsehood of the designing and the credulity of the nervous, full as much as any of his predecessors.

conduct,—that preachers from the pulpit aroused the crusading spirit of intolerance against a sect beaten down to the earth,—that the domineering party of a haughty ascendancy assailed the audience-room of the Viceroy, and "stopped the chariot or boarded the barge," to teach him how to rule, to force him to recur to a system beyond the rigour of the law, which enabled them to reign by dividing, while it placed him on the list of mannikin lord lieutenants, the wire-worked puppet of a bigoted faction. The acute, the elegant Chesterfield, soon fathomed the depths of their ferocious feebleness, and he played with the virulence he did not deign to wrestle with. When the advocates of intolerance preached persecution, he answered their counsels by an apotheghm and a *bon-mot*, —he quoted Cicero when they cited Nassau,— he gave them parties for their politics,—suppers for their sophistry, he forced them to swallow his measures with his claret,—and he stopped the

mouths of many with good dinners on whom good arguments would have been thrown away. In a word, he knew them all, he defied them all; and in despite of that party in the ministry which supported an anti-national faction, he saved the wretched country they were driving into a rebellion, which at that peculiar moment might have separated Ireland for ever from the mother country.

By this personal combination of wisdom, humanity, and impartiality, Lord Chesterfield preserved a Catholic population in the most perfect peace and obedience, during the whole of that rebellion, which in Protestant England and Presbyterian Scotland had nearly restored the Stuarts to the throne they had forfeited by their blind and bigoted attachment to papal institutions—a memorable example of the value of an enlarged philosophy in governors, and of the disposition of the people to be grateful for kindness in their rulers, of their proneness to

yield a willing obedience to authority, if encouraged by the slightest show of justice and fair dealing in those whom chance has placed over them.

But narrow hearts and narrow intellects, impervious to the more generous impulses of nature, and placing the whole force of government in the scaffold and the bayonet—oppressing those they fear, and fearing those they oppress—have too long exerted their baleful influence in brutalizing and debasing the Irish nation into permanent anarchy, creating those abuses, which they now plead in justification of their own unpitying rigour: and if in rare and distant intervals the patriotism and the kindly feelings of a Chesterfield have again found themselves under the canopy of the viceregal throne, the oppressor and the oppressed have alike been opposed to their beneficent activity. The good which Chesterfield effected in times of difficulty and danger, can now scarcely be hoped for even in the halcyon hour of peace:

and should the British empire be again involved in foreign conflict, Ireland, unemancipated Ireland, might be urged to seek new destinies for herself in an alliance from which she *might* have something to hope, but from which she could have nothing to fear more terrible than she has already encountered during the ceaseless miseries of nearly six centuries. Of this truth, harsh and repulsive as it may seem, no one who has studied the subject can entertain a rational doubt. The example of America is before the eyes of the people, and the hope delayed and the promise and the pledge unredeemed lie deep in their hearts: restrictive and penal laws, too severe even for occasional application, have become also permanent on the statute book; famine and pestilence have grown almost periodical in their visitations. From such premises what other conclusion can be drawn? An influence behind the throne, and greater than the throne, has chilled the sympathies and arrested the outstretched hand of royalty; even the col-

lective wisdom of the empire has cowered before a party, and truckled to a faction; the cup of reconciliation, though pledged by a sovereign, has been drugged with poison; and a divided cabinet has distracted the country and paralyzed the exertions of the only public functionary, who for years has administered the laws of the country with any thing approaching to the spirit of mercy and of fairness.'

From the period of Lord Chesterfield's administration, the effects produced by the permanent residence of the Irish gentry, were felt in that most blessed consequence, the developement of a public spirit. The English in Ireland, says Burke, began to feel that they were domiciliated, and had a country; and the Irish found that what was technically called "the English interest,' was gradually fading before one common and independent national will! It was in vain that one of the belligerent chiefs of the church (always the fomentors of Irish discord) still

struggled to uphold a system which was ruin to the many and power to the few. The proud churchman and servile courtier, the arrogant and despotic primate of the day, was taught to feel that he had other times and other men to deal with than those living when the country sunk under the weight of Boulter's iron crosier. It was in vain that he affected to "*do the king's business,*" (as he termed it) as other Protestant Wolseys had done it; and openly avowed his intention of carrying every government measure, *à coup de main,* and in spite of all constitutional opposition; for he lived to see the Irish gentry arrayed against the undue influence of despotic churchmen under the standard of an Irish speaker! The Irish patriots, led on by the chief of the Irish aristocracy,* and united with the

* In a contest for constitutional rights (1755), the Earl of Kildare placed himself at the head of the liberal party, which was then technically designated "the patriots:" and the agents of the Castle and

middle and the mercantile classes, formed but one caste in feeling and in effort to array public opinion, against unconstitutional measures,* and

the Church faction having represented to the King that the Irish House of Commons was bent on destroying the royal prerogative, for the purpose of preparing his Majesty's expulsion, the Earl, with "the ouldе bloode of the Geraldines" boiling in his veins, denied the calumny, and composed and with his own hand presented a memorial to the king, proving historically that the Irish were to a fault the upholders of the royal prerogative, and lovers of kingly government. For this spirited conduct, which recalls the opposition of the Kildares of old to the ministers of Henry the Seventh and Eighth, he received the glorious appellation of Father of his country.

* The terrorism of former times having now yielded to a more salutary system, the expression of public feeling took a variety of forms. It was at this period that political toasts came into fashion, introduced into social meetings through the convivial talents of a Mr. Carter, son to the Master of the

to put down for ever the direct and ruinous interference of ecclesiastical statesmen! The government was now awakened to the danger of employing the zealous and intemperate, by the resistance which the primate had roused into activity; and Stone, struck off the list of privy counsellors, the object of national hatred and party contempt, exhibited one more example of the vanity of unfounded ambition, and the weakness of that policy which is opposed to public virtue, and the plain rule of right.

The rapid progress which at this period public opinion and political science were making,

Rolls. His toast of "May all secretary bashaws and lordly high-priests be kept to their proper tackle, the sword and the bible," became a charter sentiment at all public and private dinners. The lordly high-priest was Archbishop Stone, and the bashaw was Lord G. Sackville, who brought all the pedantry of the schools to his official diplomacy, and added the superciliousness of fashion to the hauteur of conscious supremacy.

through the agency of a resident and educated gentry, was so highly estimated, that an English Lord Lieutenant, (Lord Harcourt,) as the most popular measure he could bring forward to counteract the distasteful effect of other less gracious and salutary acts, proposed on the part of government (1773) a tax on absentees! Never was such a tax less called for; for the absentees were not in that day in the proportion of one to an hundred, compared with those of the present times. Yet the draining of the resources of Ireland in the smallest proportion, the pouring forth of any modicum of native treasure into foreign coffers, was considered as nothing less than high treason to the country. The great English landholders of Ireland made a powerful resistance to a tax which principally affected themselves; but the majority by which the measure was rejected was so small* as

* The numbers of those who voted were 102 for, and 122 against the measure. The tax proposed

to leave no doubt of its popularity, and of the feelings of the public on the subject.

Those feelings, whether founded or erroneous, were by no means unnatural; and the government, on its part, has never been slow to encourage and strengthen them. The greater portion of the absentee property had fallen to the lot of its English possessors, by fraud or violence, by legal quibbling or by open proscriptions; and under the most favourable circumstances, the cultivators of that soil, which on the general principles of right and justice they imagined still to be their own property, must naturally have regarded with a jealous eye the foreign intruders. But in a country so poor as Ireland, so divested of all other means of making money beyond the cultivation of the soil, this annual exportation of excessive and burthensome rents could not

was two shillings in the pound upon rents and profits of landed property in the hands of those who did not reside in Ireland for six months in each year, from 1773 to 1775.

fail to be viewed with great discontent.* In England at the present day, if all the landed proprietors were to export themselves to the Continent, and to spend their rents in its various capitals, their absence would scarcely be felt, amidst the multiplied resources of commercial activity. Wherever the lord of the soil abandoned his dwelling, an East India Nabob, a money-broker, or a merchant, would stand forth ready to occupy his station, and rule over his domains; and the sums expended abroad, would rapidly find their way home, in increased demands for the products of English industry. On the other hand, the *nouveaux riches*, divested of hereditary pretensions and feudal prejudices, and more deeply instructed in the true principles of political economy, would afford less opposition to the reception and diffusion of the

* It is stated in the public prints that 350,000*l.* are, at this day, taken annually from the county of Kilkenny alone.

lessons of experience; and would therefore be the more acceptable to the labouring classes, than those who, trammelled in the prejudices of hereditary consequence, obstinately stand still in knowledge, while all around them is moving in advance. In Ireland, however, it has always been otherwise. Land has been ever the only instrument of industry, and rent the only source of accumulated capital. The landed proprietors, together with their immediate dependants, the members of the learned professions, have long formed exclusively the educated classes; and their expenditure has produced the only stimulus which existed, to excite the petty commerce and circumscribed industry, which in the country towns of Ireland support half-a-dozen shopkeepers; who, dignified with the name of merchants, fill the municipal offices and send representatives to Parliament. When, therefore, these favourites of fortune, the landed proprietors, expatriate themselves, their man-

sions are left silent and desolate; and none remains behind to employ the tenantry, to spread illumination, or to distribute justice, but agents, middle men, and the clergy, whose *ex parte* notions of right and wrong, whose different creed and opposed pecuniary interests wholly unfit them for the civil duties which are thus devolved upon them.

With such reasons for the unpopularity of absenteeism, the interests of government in the prevalence of such a prejudice strongly conspire. When the wretched condition of the country is made matter of general declamation, the minister calls for specific abuses; and when a specific abuse is dragged to daylight, and remedies are loudly demanded, absenteeism is made a ready skreen to conceal the incapacity or unwillingness to redress of the governing faction. Tithe abuses are met by the charge of excessive rents and absentee consumption; corruption of the magistracy is defended by the absence of indepen-

dent justices of the peace; and whatever is the evil to be averted, whatever the malpractice to be reformed, the Absentees are the ready scapegoats for every delinquent, and the plausible pretext for every forbearance.

Absenteeship, however, always founded in bad government, becomes ruinous only as it co-operates with other and mightier evils proceeding from the same cause. In a well-ordered community the number and influence of those who eat the bread of idleness and enjoy the means of expatriation, can never bear an overwhelming proportion to that of the industrious citizens chained down to a spot by the habits and the necessities of their laborious lives. Wherever this relative proportion is materially deranged, there will be found much to alter in existing institutions. In such a condition of things, a restraining tax is as futile as it is unjust. Government exists but to protect property; and any law which restrains the owner's

right of spending his money where he pleases, operates a violence, which the most urgent necessity alone could justify. On the other hand, to expect that a pecuniary mulct, of any amount short of an absolute seizure of the entire rental, would keep those at home, whom a sense of injustice, of insecurity, and of the absence of educated and liberal intercourse (of all that makes life endurable and wealth enjoyable) drives into exile, is to be utterly ignorant of human nature, and of the habits and feelings of the aristocratical part of the community.

To the pause which followed the commotions of 1745, succeeded an event which belonged not to *one* country or *one* age, but to the great history of mankind and to ages yet unborn! an event, which though it has produced the most extraordinary and wide-spreading consequences on the social condition, has not yet half worked out its mighty and incalculable effects. The American Revolution,—the great-

est explosion that ever shook the complicated fabric of political abuses, the boldest step which civilization has yet made *en avant*,—was felt in its reverberations throughout all Europe; and even Ireland, remote, isolated, and oppressed Ireland, returned some vibration to the shock! England, amidst the host of ills which assailed her at this, the most awful crisis of her history, already beheld the children of the land she had so long oppressed, bursting their bonds and hailing with their wonted "ten thousand welcomes,"* the hope of emancipation, which came to them from the greatest and freest region of the earth. It was then that a British minister, worked upon by his fears, or driven by his necessities, granted a reluctant boon, for the purpose of winning back the affections of an alienated people, whose co-operation he wanted, and whose desertion he had but too

* Cead mille faltha.

just a cause to apprehend. It was then that he admitted the Irish to rights for which during past ages they had sued in vain; and flattered those with eulogies to whom he had hitherto denied justice. It was not, therefore, wonderful, though it was new, that when an Irish member in the British senate ventured to observe, that "Ireland was the chief dependence of the British crown, and that it behoved England to admit the Irish nation to the privileges of British citizens," there was not one dissentient voice to deny the fact, or oppose the proposition;* and the bills which then passed the Parliament for the relief of the Catholics, and for the opening of the Irish trade, produced the usual effects of

* It is worth citing, that Sir Cecil Wray, one of the most violent opponents of the extension of Irish trade, observed at this time to the House, "that the true grievances of Ireland were the Irish Pension List, the Sinecure Offices, the Roman Catholic Disabilities, and the Absentees."

kindness on the human heart. From that moment America promised, and Franklin wrote in vain. "If," says that patriotic philosopher,—the patriot of humanity, and the philosopher of common sense!—in his celebrated letter to the people of Ireland, "If the government whom you at home acknowledge, does not, in conformity to its own interests, take off and remove every restraint on your trade, commerce, and manufacture, I am charged to assure you that means will be found to establish your freedom in the fullest and freest manner; and as it is the ardent wish of America to promote, as far as her other engagements will permit, a reciprocal commercial intercourse with you, I can assure you that they will seek every means to establish and maintain it."

But Ireland had not recourse to a foreign power to reclaim her rights. She placed her cause in the hands of her resident gentry: she committed it in the senate to a Grattan, and

in the field to a Charlemont! The restrictions on trade, which America offered to break, were removed by the exertions of Irish patriotism, supported by that force, which is alone constitutional, a national militia! It was at this eventful epoch of Irish regeneration, that the combined exercise of those native energies to which, in a moment of exigency, a brave and unhappy people never fail to resort, produced that bulwark of national independence, the IRISH VOLUNTEERS; and a whole people, with arms in their hands, and liberty in their hearts, stood forth the protectors of their native land, which an unnatural government had thus exposed to danger and seduction. Even England looked on with respect and gratitude at the efforts of the devoted and loyal Irish, who, forgetful of all past injuries, came forward no less in her cause than their own;* and when the Irish volunteers

* It was to the loyalty of the people of Ireland at this period, that the Lord Lieutenant of the day

presented themselves to the admiration of the empire, organised into a compact and disciplined body, under their illustrious chief the Earl of Charlemont, (whose name ever falls like light upon the page it illustrates,) it was declared in the British senate, by one whose words were then deemed as *prophet's breathings*, "that this great event resembled, intrinsically and substantially, the glorious Revolution of England in 1688!"

This event, however, so glorious for the fame, and so profitable to the interests and indepen-

alluded, when, in his speech from the throne, he observed, "That the united and great military preparations of the House of Bourbon seemed only to have roused the courage and called forth the exertions of his Majesty's brave and loyal subjects of this kingdom of Ireland; and I have only to lament that the exhausted state of the treasury has hitherto put it out of my power to give those exertions the most extensive and constitutional operation, by carrying the militia law into effect.

dence of Ireland, never could have occurred, if the majority of the gentry, with their spirit, their wealth, their influence, and their education, had not been a resident gentry! and if there is one illuminated page in the dark story of Ireland's misery! one pause in her sufferings! it belongs to this proud and blessed moment; when her people and their chiefs were armed, morally and physically, in her defence; when her senate resounded to an eloquence as pure and patriotic as the Forum ever echoed; when the private society of the capital became proverbial for its wit and festivity; and when all tended to, if it did not reach, the term of national prosperity and national glory.

But alas! this moment of promise and splendour was transient as a dream, and the bright effulgence of Irish patriotism, brilliant as the midnight meteor, was as suddenly succeeded by a midnight darkness. Causes on which it is now beside the purpose to dwell, paralysed

the virtues, and marred the hopes of the honest and the brave. Engines were put into play, and agents into activity, to destroy or to sap the foundations of national independence. Corruption and injustice recommenced their suicidal career; the rebellion and the Union were got up, and succeeded beyond the hopes of their authors; and from that epoch every evil which can afflict humanity and degrade a nation has gathered to a foul and purulent head; every sad succeeding year has been marked by some new step towards social disorganization and national extinction.

"Scarcely had the law passed ratifying that great mischief—the Union—(says one of the ablest, and what is yet more, one of the honestest and most uncompromising writers on Irish affairs, of the present or of any age) when Absenteeism, the predominant calamity of Ireland, was fearfully accelerated. The chief proprietors fled from the metropolis, as from an

invading army; and the country affording neither interest nor expectation, they expatriated themselves in shame, in disgust, in anguish, in despair. A category of evils beset the land. —Those who had entertained fair hopes soon found their prospects darken, and a long night close the transient day. To infatuation succeeded self-torment. A chief Judge died of a broken heart because he had participated in that signal treachery—another Judge asked pardon of God and his country, for sanctioning it with his vote. Pitt, the machinist, perished amidst the misfortunes of the Empire —and Castlereagh, in his pride and power, became his own executioner. The noble delinquents and their race perish together. Twenty-four Irish peerages have become extinct since the Union in January, 1801, exclusive of Peerages under a superior title, but continued in an inferior honour—and while I write, another of the noble order which stands between the pre-

rogative and the people, as hounds between the huntsman and the hare, is extinguished. Thus nature takes vengeance on the exalted traitors to their country. The Union cannot subsist—Sin and Death have fixed their peremptory seal of doom upon it. Not all the vices of Ferdinand to his parentage and family and country—not all the deeds of the magnanimous Allies and the Holy Alliance to Spain, Germany, and Italy—no, not the repeated partitions of Poland by the Royal Robbers, the Austrian, and Frederic, and Catherine, equalled altogether the dreadful sum of sinning by the English Ministry, in preparing, prosecuting, and accomplishing that sad catastrophe—the Incorporate Union of Ireland with Great Britain."—*Ensor's Address to the People of Ireland.*

Previously to the Act of Union, Absenteeism, though encouraged by the geographical position of the country, and promoted by some inveterate habits derived from ancient abuse,

was principally confined, among the native Irish, to a few individuals whose ill understood vanity tempted them to seek for a consequence abroad, which is ever denied to the unconnected stranger, a consequence which no extravagant expense can purchase. With a few exceptions, therefore, the malady was confined to the great English proprietors of forfeited estates, whose numbers must in the progress of events have been diminished, by the dissipations inseparable from unbounded wealth, and the growth of commercial and manufactural fortunes. It might, in some cases, indeed, be both a vice, and a ridicule, in the absent; but had the nation in other respects been well used and well governed, it would have been of no serious evil to those who remained at home. But the Act of Union, whatever may be its other operations, meritorious or vicious, at once converted a local disease into a national pestilence. The centre of business and of pleasure, the mart

of promotion, and the fountain of favour, were by this one fatal act at once removed into a foreign land; ambition, avarice, dissipation, and refinement, all combined to seduce the upper classes into a desertion of their homes and country: and as each succeeding ornament of the Irish capital abandoned his hotel, as each influential landlord quitted his castle in the country, or his house in the city, a new race of vulgar upstarts, of uneducated and capricious despots, usurped their place, spreading a barbarous *morgue* over the once elegant society of the metropolis, and banishing peace and security from the mountain and the plain.

Many whom temptation could not hitherto seduce from home, were now forced by fear to fly; and every passion, every motive combined to drive from the happy land, all those who were possessed of the means of flight. It is in vain that patriotism struggles and conscience arrests the departing step of those

who yet linger behind in painful vacillation. Self-preservation must and will in the end prevail. Whatever is educated, whatever is tasteful, whatever is liberal, will too probably fly a land, where the insolence of official rank supplies the amenity of an admitted aristocracy, and where vulgar wealth, acquired by political subserviency, and too frequently unaccompanied by knowledge, holds talent at arms' length, and rejects wit from its coteries as dangerous to its own dull supremacy and hostile to the repose of its own "*fat contented ignorance.*" Philanthropists, disgusted with the perpetual spectacle of hopeless wretchedness and irredeemable despair, will seek relief by flying the misery they cannot mitigate; the enlightened and the liberal will turn with horror from the country where laws of exception have been adopted into the permanent code; and where necessitated violence is only met by judicial severity and legal murder. The landholder, wearied by his contests with the clergy, and in-

timidated by the armed and masked opposition of his tenantry, will be contented to purchase repose by abandoning at once the soil and its produce, to the proctors, the police-men and their chiefs. The *sbirri* of Ireland will alone find in a land, thus every way accursed, the elements congenial to their existence, as the reptiles and insects subsist in that putrefaction, which spreads disease and death among the nobler animals.

In the present political prospect of Ireland, the eye of philosophy and philanthrophy turns on every side in search of a principle of regeneration, and turns in vain. On every side a circle of recurrent cause and effect, like the mystic emblem of the Egyptians, points to an eternity of woe, and to endless cycles of misgovernment and resistance. As long as the actual system continues, (as long as, every cause is forced to concur in rendering Ireland uninhabitable,) so long will it be impossible to organize

any plan for civilizing, tranquillizing, and enriching the country. It is an empty and an idle boast in the British House of Commons, that it devotes its successive nights to the debating Irish affairs, so long as the religious division of the people and the proconsular government founded upon that division are to be recognized as sound policy or Christian charity. The half measures which have hitherto been adopted, far from proving beneficial, and composing the contentions of hostile factions, have served only to increase discontent and disarm inquiry.* Nor can the ministers be entitled to any praise for

* These half measures are, however, in the present state of affairs almost inevitable.—A divided cabinet founded upon a divided state of public opinion, opposes an insuperable barrier to a frank and honest reform: and oscillations of principle and of practice must attend the effort to manage factions so nicely balanced.

generosity who dare not, in the first place, be just. In spite, therefore, of all their professions of zeal and compassion for the national distress; in spite of all their parliamentary tamperings with the national abuses, they must still remain answerable for the greater part of the absenteeship which they strenuously hold up as the giant ill, over which they have no controul, and for the existence of which they imagine themselves not responsible.

The grand principle of "*divide et impera*" has produced both the religious question and the question between landlords and tenants, which are the hinges on which all the misfortunes of Ireland turn. To commence the work of regeneration in earnest, that principle must be fairly and honestly abandoned: when this is done, and not before, absenteeship, with every other evil which has grown out of the monstrous anarchical system, that has so

long subsisted, will gradually disappear; and proprietors in Ireland, as in other countries, will inhabit their country, when their country becomes inhabitable.—"*Ubi bene, ibi patria*" is a maxim not altogether unreasonable; and, surely, if in any circumstances it is entitled to toleration, it is in that land where the greater the patriotism and virtue, the less chance is there of social comfort and rational happiness. To the absentees themselves we would willingly appeal with every invocation that can bind the conscience or awaken the heart. But the appeal were worse than idle, it would in fact be injurious, by pointing to effects and disengaging the attention from causes. In the present condition of affairs, absenteeism is a necessitated evil!! In the absentees it is less a crime than a misfortune; and with respect to the government it is so far from being a justification of its acts, that it has become a pregnant and a pointed conclusion of

its ignorance of all sound principle, or its heartless indifference to all those interests which the unhappy destiny of "the *most unhappy country under heaven,*" has committed to its charge.

THE END.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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UNFORESEEN circumstances, over which the Author had no influence or controul, had altogether checked the progress of this Work, suspended the publication of its latter parts, and left them on the Publisher's shelves unadvertised and uncirculated.

This temporary relinquishment had given rise to unfounded and injurious reports of its suppression; an object which never was for one moment in the contemplation of the Author, nor sought for, or even suggested, by the Government of England.

On the contrary—the lamentable and unimproving march of Ireland from the period of the Union having fully proved the deceptious prospective given to that fatal measure by its mistaken or corrupt supporters, and exciting a novel interest and grave reflections of vital importance to the British Empire, the Author had determined to seize upon the first available opportunity of fulfilling his engagement to the friends and patrons of the Work, by its completion.

Those friends were not confined to one party. They were mingled in all—they comprised several of the highest orders of society—many who held, and some who still hold important stations in the Government of both countries;—and the commencing parts of the Work having been honoured by the approbation and encouragement of His present Majesty and other Members of His Royal House, it was with deep regret the Author found himself, from a succession of causes, for several years unable to fulfil his intentions, and gratify his own laudable ambition, by compiling into a compact Memoir, the most important Historic events of Ireland. In many of those he was himself a not unimportant actor. He possessed also the advantage of individual intimacy or acquaintance with the most celebrated personages of all parties; without which, and the fidelity of a contemporary and independent pen, the delineation of their characters and the record of their conduct, if not lost for ever, would have descended to posterity with imperfect details and an ambiguous authenticity; —or have left a wide chasm in a highly interesting epocha of British History.

The fallacious measure of a Legislative Union,—the progress of which from commencement to consummation, the Author energetically resisted—has proved by its inoperative or mischievous results, the justness of that resistance. And he now, in common with many of the most distinguished of its original supporters, deeply deplores its accomplishment. But established by lapse of time—confirmed by passive assent—and complicated with some beneficial, and many political and financial arrangements, its tranquil reversal seems to have passed feasibility. Yet—as an hereditary friend to British connexion—the Author hopes by the revival and completion of this History, to open wide the eyes of Great Britain to the present dangers of Ireland;—to draw aside the curtain of ignorance and prejudice by which her history has been so long obscured—to compare her once rising prosperity with her existing miseries—to discover the occult causes of

their continuance and the false principles of her misrule—to display her sacrifices for England—and to unmask her libellers in both countries.

Developments such as these may rouse the Legislature to probe her wounds to their depth—to employ her labour—to succour—to foster—and to rule her on the broad principles of a steady and philanthropic policy—and to relinquish for ever that system of coercive Government, which an experience of many centuries has proved to be destructive of almost every thing—except her crimes and her population.

The British people should also learn that the absence of the ancient Nobles and protecting Aristocracy of Ireland,—drawn away by the Union from their demesnes and tenantry to the Seat of Legislation, and replaced only by the griping hands and arbitrary sway of upstart deputies,—increases in proportion with the miseries and turbulence of the lower orders; and that the luxuriance of vegetation which clothes that capable Island, has, through the same causes, become only a harbinger of want, or the forbidden fruit of a famished peasantry.

It should therefore be the object of every pen and of every tongue, to render the Union as innoxious as its paralyzing nature can now admit of; to recall the proprietors of the Irish soil to a sense of their own security and their country's welfare; and thereby strengthen the ties which should bind the two nations together, in equality, prosperity, and affection —on the firmness and durability of which *species* of connexion depends, not only the constitutional security of England herself, but perhaps the political existence of both countries.

Such is the Author's view in the completion of this Work. The obstacles to its progress are surmounted, and its publication is now in the hands of those who will spare nothing to render it worthy of its object, and ensure a lasting and beneficial record to the United Empire.

It is fortunate for Ireland, and disastrous to her calum-

niators, that a recent and great event has at once exposed the misrepresentations of her enemies, and displayed a great source of her misfortunes. The visit of a conciliating King to a distracted people rapidly disclosed their native character, and produced a burst of unfeigned, unanimous, genuine loyalty—never before experienced in such profusion by any Monarch from his subjects. The equivocating language of diplomacy was rejected for awhile. The King was a Patriot, and the People were loyal. For the first time they were allowed to approach each other. Both were sincere—and both were ardent. In a few days, the King became despotic in the affections of the Nation, and his Ministers descended into a comparative insignificance. When he arrived, he was respected as a British King—but when he departed, he was adored as an Irish Monarch. He saw at once that the existence of faction and discord was incompatible with the peace and the prosperity of Ireland; and that she hung on Great Britain, as a withering limb upon a healthful body—essential to its symmetry, but useless to its functions and injurious to its Constitution.

There was but one remedy—conciliation. His Majesty saw its efficacy and commanded its adoption.—But his commands were disobeyed by the *Regal Rebels**—and Ireland is still seen withering and cankering—by the obstinacy of intolerant faction, the irritation of local tyranny, and the multiplying mischiefs resulting from disobedience to the benevolent and wise commands of the only British King who ever yet set foot on the Irish shore as a friend, and as a patriot.

* Mr. Grattan's definition of men, "Who make their loyalism a "pretence to perpetuate their supremacy,—and distract the peace of a "Country under colour of protecting it."

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Government of Maharashtra
on 04 February, 2016